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A GRAND DUCHESS

VOL. I



Anna Amalia
from the original painting in the Wilhelms-Palais, Weimar:
With the permission of the Grand Duke of Weimar

OPERATIONS AND PORTRAITS

VOL. I

York : ...
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A GRAND DUCHESS

THE LIFE OF ANNA AMALIA
DUCHESS OF SAXE-WEIMAR-EISENACH
AND THE CLASSICAL CIRCLE OF WEIMAR

BY

FRANCES GERARD

AUTHOR OF "THE ROMANCE OF LUDWIG II.
OF BAVARIA," "PICTURESQUE DUBLIN," ETC.

WITH 42 ILLUSTRATIONS AND PORTRAITS

VOL. I

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To

PAULINE

GRAND DUCHESS OF SAXE-WEIMAR-EISENACH

THIS VOLUME IS DEDICATED

BY PERMISSION

P R E F A C E

MY acknowledgments are due to many kind helpers, and in a special manner to Herr von Bojanowski, director of the Grand Ducal library at Weimar and to Herr Bernard Suphan, Goethe and Schiller Archiv., Weimar ; also the eminent bookseller, Joseph Bär of Frankfurt, has been of infinite service to me.

I may add that the late Grand Duke of Weimar, Carl Alexander, took a personal interest in the biography of Anna Amalia, to whose memory he was devoted, and who is now introduced to English readers for the first time.

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A GRAND DUCHESS

CHAPTER I

I AM not going to enter upon so deep a subject as the early history of Thuringia. Those who wish to know more of the warriors, whose names and brave deeds fill the pages of the ancient histories, should read the early annals of Thuringia. It will be enough for our present purpose to mention a few facts which may, or may not, be familiar to my readers.

In the first place, I would recall to the recollection of readers of history that Thuringia, where the duchies of Weimar and Eisenach are situated, is one of the choicest spots in all Germany. So dear was it to the early German rulers, that, when the rest of that extensive country was parcelled out into dukedoms, the emperors reserved for themselves Thuringia, placing stewards, or super-

visors—noblemen of high estate—to exercise the duty of governors, giving them the title of Landgraf, or, later, Markgraf. These deputy governors, who resided at the watch castle or tower of Eisenach, well known now-a-days as the Wartburg, were hard fighters, men of courage and cruelty, who flit through the pages of Thuringian history and give it a romantic interest.

Especially interesting is the story of Ludwig IV. and his wife, the sainted Elizabeth, who figure in Wagner's setting of the legend of the Knight Tannhäuser, so intimately associated with the Wartburg.¹ The holy Elizabeth, who was a

¹ The Wartburg was the residence of the Counts of Eisenach. It has a commanding situation, standing as it does on the summit of the mountain and commanding a splendid view of the surrounding country. From the highest point an unrivalled panorama stretches before the eye. No sublime thoughts, however, rise to the mind, for the far-stretching landscape is in its character idyllic, while the wooded hills (for they cannot be dignified with the name of mountains) which are called the Thuringian forest, make a background for the highly romantic Wartburg which teems with all manner of old-world traditions. All the world knows it was the Wartburg which afforded Luther "a protecting prison." Luther's room is shown with all its relics, but the mark on the wall, where he threw the inkstand at the persevering devil who was tempting him, has disappeared, having been taken away bit by bit by curious visitors. The late Grand Duke Karl Alexander was very fond of the Wartburg, and constantly stayed there. In

Hungarian Princess, was brought to the Wartburg when three years old, and affianced at that tender age to her future husband, Ludwig IV., surnamed the Pious (A.D. 1223.) The young pair were both holy and God-serving. Ludwig's worldly-minded mother, did everything, we are told, that a wicked woman could do to wean her son's affections from his affianced wife. But Elizabeth's piety and, let us add, her beauty, prevailed, and they were formally wedded and lived happily for many years in the castle. At last the idea seized upon the pious Ludwig that he should make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. His holy wife would not interfere, but accompanied him on his journey for three days, and then returned to Eisenach "sorrowing." She never saw her beloved husband again; he died at Jerusalem, and was buried there.¹

Her son being only a child, his cousin or uncle,

the restoration of the ancient Burg great judgment and good taste have been shown.

The Venusberg, where the amiable goddess Holda (the inventress of Free Love) had her abode, is said to be in the immediate neighbourhood of Eisenach. The knight was a Thuringian, but the love story of Elizabeth is one of Wagner's inventions, and has no foundation in fact.

¹ This holy legend makes no mention of Elizabeth's giving her life to save the soul of the Knight Tannhäuser.

Heinrich der Raspe, undertook the guardianship, and in the usual course drove out the widow and children. Elizabeth had to wander about for years, poor and helpless, but always saintly. At last the wicked Heinrich's heart was touched by the admonitions of a monk, named Rudolph. He sent for Elizabeth, and restored to her and her children the duchies he had usurped. Elizabeth spent the remaining years of her life in prayer and good works. She laid aside all appearance of her rank, wore coarse garments, and gave everything to the poor. Her health speedily gave way, and soon she passed to a better life, an example of a saintly death. Some years later a church was built on the spot where she was buried, and dedicated to her. Pope Gregory IX. in the year A.D. 1324, beatified her.

In course of time, the Thuringian Landgrafs disappear from the pages of the old chronicles, and we find their places taken by the Markgrafs of Meissen. Presently these too go their way, and we come to a new leader, who may be called the founder of the reigning family of Dukes of Weimar and Eisenach. They were a strong race, these Saxons or Ernestines, who dwelt by the shores

of the Elbe and the Weser. They grew and multiplied over the land, and, ever on the look-out for new pastures, suddenly swooped down upon beautiful Thuringia, and made it and Meissen their own, the very name being blotted out and that of Saxony taking its place; whilst, in lieu of the ancient lions which were to be seen on the shields and armour of the Markgrafs, there now appeared the *rautenkranz* or rue plant of the Saxons.

It would be writing history, were I to go through the long line of Saxon heroes who distinguished themselves in love and war. Their chronicles teem with romantic episodes, such as the carrying away of Eric and Albert, the two sons of the Elector of Saxony. Then came the blast of the Reformation, which may be said to have had its rise at Eisenach, where Luther lived in the castle that had once been the refuge of the sainted Elizabeth.

One of the first converts was Frederick, called the Wise, son of the Elector Ernst, and his example was followed by John the Steadfast, who fought tooth and nail for Luther and his creed. This storm subsiding, by degrees we come to a certain

Duke William, who, with his brothers—by some writers said to be seven, by others eleven in number,—played a great part in the history of the little duchy. One of these, Bernard, acquired great military fame during the Thirty Years' War, while another brother earned for himself by his excesses such a reputation, that his name became a by-word. In 1626, an outlaw and an outcast from his own country, he took service with the King of Denmark, who accorded him the rank of colonel ; but his conduct was such that he had to be dismissed. He then betook himself to Austria, where he affected a desire to embrace the religion of that country, and was welcomed with joy as an illustrious convert. Soon, however, he showed his true character, and, having killed an Austrian nobleman, he was thrown into prison. Finally, he was claimed by the duke, his brother, and sent back to Weimar, where he was confined in an iron cage, like a wild beast. One day he was found weltering in a pool of blood at the bottom of his cage, and all manner of stories were circulated ascribing his death to supernatural causes. It was believed by the people that he had a compact with the devil, who used to visit him in his cage.

It is more probable that either he died by his own hand, or was removed by the duke's order. It must, however, be said that Duke William's subsequent conduct was not in harmony with the theory of fratricide. He was an honest, open-hearted man ; his reign of twenty years was peaceable, and neither in life nor death did he exhibit any symptoms of remorse such as might have been expected in one guilty of so terrible a crime.

His successor, who was theologically inclined, thought more of writing pamphlets than governing his duchy. His grandson, who succeeded him—by name Ernest Augustus—was one of the most powerful princes of the House of Saxony. His appearance, it is true, was mean and unprepossessing. He was diminutive in stature and lean as a skeleton. His eccentricities might have led a stranger to think him at times insane ; but when it came to matters of importance, he showed extraordinary shrewdness.

In the memoirs of the lively Wilhelmina, Margravine of Bayreuth, there is an amusing account of the marriage of this Duke of Weimar with her sister-in-law Charlotte, who was beautiful

as an angel, but at times only fit for a lunatic asylum.

The duke, who was looking out for a consort, had seen the portrait of Charlotte, and fell fathoms deep in love with the sweet presentment of girlish loveliness. He at once demanded her hand in marriage, on the condition that his proposal should be kept secret until his arrival at Bayreuth. This was agreed to. Nevertheless, preparations for the wedding were made quietly. The suitor duly arrived, and at first his behaviour was as it should be. He frequently looked at the beautiful princess, whose charms were set off to the best advantage by her toilette, which had been carefully supervised by Wilhelmina. She was evidently most anxious to get the half-crazy princess, who, however, showed no signs of flightiness on this occasion, off her hands. Everything having, so far, gone off well, there was great dismay when, on the following day, the eccentric lover seemed to have forgotten his matrimonial intentions. He did nothing but talk, and "the lies he told were so extravagant that the devil himself could not exceed them." In spite of his disagreeable eccentricities, the match was too advantageous

to be allowed to slip, and by dint of diplomacy the wedding of this strangely assorted pair took place. The Margravine Wilhelmina showed no pity for her unfortunate, half-mad sister-in-law, who, when it was made clear to her disordered brain that she was to be the wife of the duke, "fell on her knees weeping like an idiot." Her tears, however, availed her little with the resolute Wilhelmina, who herself dressed the unwilling bride for the sacrifice, put a crown on her head, and brought the poor princess down to the audience chamber, where the chaplain gave the nuptial benediction. The newly married pair remained at Bayreuth for a week, during which time there was a constant dread lest one or other of the eccentric couple should run away. This, however, did not occur.

As may be supposed, the marriage did not turn out happily. We get, however, only fragmentary glimpses of the couple. We know the beautiful Charlotte died after giving birth to a son, Constantine, who became an orphan at eleven years old, the wayward duke dying of fever. We shall hear again of Constantine, but, for the present, must leave him under the care of the two



guardians appointed by the Emperor of Austria—Duke Frederick III. of Gotha, and Duke Josias of Coburg, the latter being next heir to the Duchy of Weimar.

We must now turn to another portion of Germany and make acquaintance with another reigning duke, who, in his own person and in the surroundings of his ducal court, presented a great contrast to the eccentric ruler of Weimar.

In 1737 the Duchy of Brunswick was governed by Duke Karl, who has a distinct interest for us, as being father to Anna Amalia, the heroine of our story.

We learn from memoirs and contemporary literature at the beginning of the eighteenth century that Germany was much behind other European nations in refinement and mental cultivation. We read in Doctor Vehse's voluminous histories of the manners and customs which prevailed at the electoral court of Celle, of the immorality, drunkenness, and illiterate state of the reigning dukes all over Germany; whilst the royal court of Prussia afforded anything but a bright example to the smaller states. Readers of biographies and memoirs will recall some very lively incidents

described by the Margravine of Bayreuth, who was a princess of the royal house of Prussia, and her testimony is supported by many other writers. The treatment of men of genius, artists, and musicians, was of the shabbiest character. Klopstock, the founder, as we may call him, of German poetry, owed to a foreign prince the small pension which kept him from starvation.¹ England came to the rescue of Schubart; while Lessing, too proud to make known his condition, suffered actual want.

It is pleasant to find a different position of affairs prevailing at the Court of Brunswick, which seems to have served as a pioneer to Attic Weimar. At Wolfenbüttel, the capital of Brunswick, there was every inducement to attract men of letters and artists: a fine picture gallery, a handsome library and academy, and the Collegium Carolinum, founded by Duke Karl, to which a number of learned professors were attached.

Unfortunately the Duchess of Brunswick,² who

¹ This was in his early days; later he made his home at the Court of the great Landgravine of Hesse Darmstadt.

² The duke had married in 1738 Charlotte, third daughter of Frederick, first King of Prussia, and Caroline Dorothea, daughter of George II. Elector of Hanover and King of England. Her

A Grand Duchess

had been brought up in a different school, did not share her husband's scholarly tastes, and if it had been left to her, the duke's children, and especially the daughters, would have fared badly.

On October 24th, 1739, the bells of Wolfenbüttel rang out to announce that Her Royal Highness had given birth to a daughter; this was a grievous disappointment which, after the manner of the time, was resented as being the fault of the unwelcome intruder. Having caused her parents this first trial, she was never looked upon with affection; the duchess especially preserved a grudge against her daughter which lasted her lifetime, and which tinged the childhood of the little Anna Amalia with bitterness, and clouded her early girlhood.

This conduct on the part of the duchess bears out the character given of her by her sister, the Margravine of Bayreuth,¹ "Charlotte is very handsome, very satirical, false, jealous and

mother was the unfortunate Sophia Dorothea of Celle, thus forming a "link" between the present royal family of England and the ducal house of Weimar.

¹ The same authority states that the Duke of Brunswick's sister, married to Frederick the Great, was wonderfully handsome, but "as vulgar as a basket woman."

selfish." She adds: "The Prince her husband is handsome, but stern and disagreeable, and it is said regarded his children, and especially his daughters, as mere household appendages." This may have been true, but, like many others, Duke Karl had different sides to his character, and on many occasions showed a much warmer heart than is compatible with the description given of him.

With such surroundings Amalia's childhood could not have been happy. In her "Gedanken," or book of recollections, she says: "When I look back to my childhood, that spring-time of life, what do I see? An ever-recurring round of sacrifices made for others. I was not loved by my parents, who on every occasion kept me in the background, my brothers and sisters being always considered first. I was treated, in fact, like an outcast, and yet Thou, O my Creator, hadst endowed me with a sensitive, loving heart, which suffered misery from this want of tenderness and pined for affection. I was starving for love, and I received the hard crust of mere duty."

Then she goes on to speak of those who were entrusted with her education, especially her gover-

ness. "She, who was to form my mind and discipline my young heart, gave way to every ignoble passion, and vented all her ill-humour on me." The perpetual scolding of this woman broke the spirit of the child, who shrank away from a harsh word, and could find no answer to give to her tormentor. Her nature was, however, so generous, that she was always ready to forget the treatment she had received. An interesting letter from the little princess to her father, when she was seven years old, contains a covert reproach for the distinction made between her and her brothers and sisters. It was written in French, the language then used at royal courts.

"MY VERY DEAR PAPA,

Permit me, my dear Papa, to remind you of your little daughter Amalia, who loves you as well, if not better, than her brothers and sisters, although she has not the same opportunity of expressing her affection. When I am older I shall acquit myself much better in every way, and give you satisfaction in my lessons. Therefore, my dear Papa, I beg of you to have patience with me, and you will find *que je m'en recule*

pour mieux sauter. I hope, dearest Papa, you will return soon, and that you will always honour me with your precious affection. With every assurance of my fond love and with every sentiment of profound respect, I remain, my very dear Papa,

“Your obedient and devoted daughter,

“ANNA AMALIA.”

This letter, if really the composition of a child of such tender years (and it has undoubtedly certain marks of being genuine), is a wonderful production. It does not seem, however, to have altered the position of the poor little princess, who, as she grew older and wiser, ceased to make any complaints, finding them, no doubt, useless. She tells her pitiful tale in her “Gedanken.” “Driven to despair by the unkind treatment I received, I withdrew into myself. I suffered myself to be reproached, insulted, beaten, without uttering a word, and as far as possible persisted in my own course. By degrees I became indifferent to the slights put upon me. I submitted to the indignity of having my place as the eldest taken from me, and withdrew without murmuring into the background.”

This simple statement fills the reader with compassion. At the same time there was profit to be derived from this school, hard as it was. Anna Amalia learned how to withdraw into herself, and how to keep her feelings under command, to measure the worth of men and of things, and how to appraise the value of love and applause. She accustomed herself to a proper reserve, which kept all familiarity at a distance, and, guarded by this shield, she filled her mind with mental riches. For this purpose no place was better suited than the court of the duke, her father.

Here the greatest sympathy for art and artists was encouraged, and the galleries were filled with the finest masterpieces. Herr Graun, a musician of note, who had written the fine oratorio, *The Death of Jesus*, was an honoured friend; so, too, was Fleischer, Anna Amalia's music teacher and also professor at the Collegium Carolinum, which had been founded by Duke Karl for the cultivation of German literature and art. The duke's openly expressed opinion was that the greatest gift any one can give to his children is a taste for knowledge. These words show that those who represented Duke Karl as an

indifferent father, judged only by the coldness or haughtiness of his manner. But it must be remembered this sort of distance between parent and child was the rule, not the exception, in the eighteenth century.

There is no doubt that, as the young Amalia grew older, she was taken more notice of by the duke, who found her an intelligent and appreciative listener. The praises of her different instructors had, moreover, flattered his parental vanity. All those who had to do with the formation of the young princess's mind prophesied that she would make a mark in the intellectual world. Her studies were pressed forward with great zeal, Amalia finding no labour too much to attain knowledge. There can be no doubt that the atmosphere of learning, and the studious habits inculcated in early youth, together with the constant association with men celebrated in every branch of literature and science, laid a foundation in the young girl's mind of reverence for genius and appreciation of talent, and that this feeling was the incentive, which caused her in after-years to gather round her little court at Weimar a group of the most intellectual and artistic men and women of the time.

But we are looking a long way ahead ; the young princess had to pass through many changes and new developments, before, like the chrysalis, she entered on a more brilliant phase, not as a butterfly, but as a *femme savante* of the eighteenth century.

Her studious life at Wolfenbüttel was interrupted by a not unusual event in a woman's, and more especially in a princess's life. The reader will guess without my telling that this event was a proposal of marriage, which came from the young Duke Constantine of Weimar, whose story has a romantic interest. It will be remembered that, by his father's will, Constantine was left a ward of the Emperor of Austria, who appointed two guardians, Duke Frederick III. of Gotha, and Duke Josias of Coburg.¹ The last named was to supervise the duchy of Weimar during the minority of the heir, while Duke Frederick was to have the care of his person and education, and likewise to administer the little duchy of Eisenach. Both guardians are said to have played the part of the wicked uncle in the story-book. We are told that the boy duke was allowed no

¹ See page 10.

other companion but the court fool, or jester, who, however, showed himself anything but a fool. It is said that he managed to give his young charge a fair amount of education, and when the opportunity offered, got the young duke out of the hands of his unkind guardians.

This tale, not being supported by any trustworthy evidence, must be looked upon as an exaggeration of the actual facts. The delicacy and constant ill-health of the young duke, together with his shy and nervous nature, made it impossible for him to be often seen by his people. On his rare appearances in public his pallid face, nervous manner, weary, subdued and altogether crushed appearance, gave the idea that he was "terrorised and unhappy." He evinced none of the activity or love of amusement common to his age. Still, there seems no reason to suppose he had been unfairly treated in any way ; although it could not be said that either of his guardians had administered their trust, in regard to the two duchies of Weimar and Eisenach, as honourable guardians should.

When, in 1756, the young duke, who had attained his eighteenth year, became of age to



manage his own affairs, it was found that a most shameless course of speculation had been permitted. Grievous was the condition of the poorer classes, from the amount of taxation imposed upon them ; yet, in spite of these exorbitant imposts and customs duties, the treasury was practically empty. The ducal residences were in a ruinous condition, and everything that was valuable had disappeared. Such had been the shameful conduct of these unjust stewards.

Anna Amalia's father was well acquainted with the condition of Weimar ; but he was a far-seeing man and he knew that the duchy would, with good management, speedily recover from its present depleted condition. The duke was, therefore, by no means a bad match for his daughter, who, as she was the eldest, was bound to make way for the others coming after her.¹

In those days there was no such thing as disputing parental authority ; so, when Amalia was

¹ There was a connection between the House of Weimar and that of Brunswick, the Margravine of Bayreuth, aunt to Amalia on her mother's side, being likewise aunt to the young Duke of Weimar. In all probability it was the Margravine (who had displayed her match-making powers in marrying Constantine's eccentric father to her mad sister-in-law, Charlotte of Bayreuth), who now suggested this alliance between the young pair.



ERNEST CONSTANTINE, DUKE OF SAXE-WEIMAR AND EISENACH.



was told that her future husband was coming, and that her new clothes were being got ready, she made no protest. She frankly acknowledges that she was glad to be released from "the bondage in which she was kept," and experienced no regret at leaving a home where she had been shown so little affection, but felt like a caged bird who, at last, receives its freedom—or rather, she says, "like a sick person" who has been long deprived of every healthy enjoyment and, "rising from a sick bed, breathes the fresh air of heaven."

But nevertheless Amalia, like all young girls, must have had her dreams as to what her lover would be like. She could hardly have imagined he would turn out so poor a creature as this pale, depressed and listless boy, only two years older than herself, with little education, but with kind and gentle ways. He was accompanied by his chief minister and adviser, Count von Büнау, who had been placed in this position by the emperor. Büнау was a man of great ability who for many years had held posts of importance at the Austrian Court. After the death of Charles VII. he retired to his estates near Dresden, where he occupied himself in the formation of his celebrated

library. He was fortunate in possessing the friendship of the learned philosopher, Winckelmann. In 1731 he was called to the Court of Frederick III. of Gotha, where he occupied the post of Governor or Statthalter in Eisenach.

Duke Constantine had known the minister at Gotha and had engaged him to enter his service. Büнау's sharp eyes took note of the girlish princess, and, later, these two came into conflict, as we shall see. In the suite of the young duke there was likewise a man destined to play an important part in the young duchess's life. This was Anton von Fritsch, at this time only twenty-five years old, a clever and a rising man. We shall meet him again later on.

Büнау, assisted by Fritsch, arranged all the preliminaries of the marriage; and, when once the money question was settled, "the wooing was not long a-doing." No one gave much thought to the poor bride wedded to this sickly duke, who needed a nurse more than a wife. It was altogether what may be called a marriage of convenience. Amalia, indeed, honestly acknowledges that love had nothing to do with the affair. "At sixteen," she writes, "I was given

in marriage, as most princesses are, without being consulted. But I did not complain. I was glad to break the chains that had held me so long in bondage, and like a young falcon who longs to fly through the air, I was eager to try my wings alone."

Of her feelings in regard to the husband given to her by parental order she says nothing. He was undoubtedly not fashioned so as to take a young girl's fancy ; nevertheless, his portrait represents an amiable and gentle-looking youth. There is neither obstinacy nor vice in his face, and it was not long before his amiable qualities and the good sense which made him respected as well as loved, endeared him to his young wife, who, for the rest, only required a moderate amount of kindness to make her happy.

The marriage took place on March 16th, 1756. (The festivity with all its countless ceremonies, which are fully detailed in the different accounts of the wedding, need not be repeated here.) The young pair then set out on their homeward journey, the preparations for which were similar to those for "a journey through the desert." They were accompanied by a suite of thirty-seven

persons, amongst whom was the composer, Bach, who held the office of *kapellmeister*.


The newly married pair travelled in a berline or roomy coach, and what with the bad roads and the breakdown of one of the carriages, did not reach their destination until March 24th, when they made a triumphal entry into Weimar. The young duke, aware that his subjects had suffered considerably through the pernicious system of government pursued by the regent, had ordered that no expense was to be incurred in decorating or illuminating the town. The soldiers made a military display, lining the streets through which the youthful couple drove in an open carriage, so that all those who wished could see them.

Duke Constantine, his pale face working with nervous emotion, made a curious contrast to his rosy young bride, who wore a purple dress embroidered in gold, with an underskirt also embroidered. Her hair, which was powdered, was drawn high over a cushion, with a rose at the side. Her youthful face beamed with happiness, and her large and beautiful eyes danced like a child's, as she now and again drew aside the priceless lace veil lent by her mother, and looked at the

crowd. The childish face wore such a friendly look, there was such goodness and determination to like her people and her surroundings, and to do her duty, however ungrateful the task might be, that each one felt that a friend and not a stranger had entered Weimar.

And yet the outlook that lay before her was by no means a bright one. Let us listen for a moment to the sharp voice of Henrietta von Eggloffstein.

“Poor Amalia!” she writes, “instead of the luxurious arrangements at Brunswick, she finds at Weimar nothing but the remains of former greatness. During the minority everything of value has disappeared, and even the household has been dismissed. Accustomed to a circle of cultured people, amongst whom she has grown up, nourished from her childhood on a love of the arts, and educated to appreciate all that is best in knowledge, only able to express herself fluently in French; imagine her feelings, poor child, when she finds in Weimar a set of savages, who absolutely don’t understand a word of the language of society; these townspeople are, in fact, indifferent to everything, except the small tittle-tattle which



goes on amongst the women ; and as for the men, they do not understand how to behave in the society of *ladies*, and prefer their own brutal amusements."

Henrietta von Eggloffstein had a sharp tongue, and when she wrote to her correspondents her pen was quite as incisive as her speech, so we must hope this picture was exaggerated. We find, however, the young duchess giving her father a rather depressing account of her surroundings. She describes the town as "insignificant," the castle or residence having small windows sunk in the thickness of the wall ; it had all the air of a watch-tower, and stood on the bank of the river Ilm. "Piper," she adds, (the maid given by her mother), "says the doors in the castle are so loosely hung that they can be closed with a carrot, just as in the peasants' cottages at home." In another letter she complains "that no proper respect is paid to either the duke or myself, all the royal prerogatives being set aside." Even the correspondence of the young couple was interfered with.

In August the Margrave Frederick of Brandenburg, writing to the Duke of Brunswick, tells

him that it is reported *everywhere* that letters addressed to the duke and duchess were kept from them, and that it was not *convenable* that such a liberty should be allowed.

Later (in August) we find the young duchess complaining to the duke, her father, that her husband wishes her to have some lady of experience in court etiquette about the court : some one who would act as lady-in-waiting and know her duties. "But this is just the sore point," says Anna Amalia, "there is no such treasure to be found, and for my part I am determined not to be made a *cat's-paw*." This expression shows that living in the atmosphere of a court all the days of her youth had early initiated her into court intrigues. Her suspicions, however, were probably unfounded ; for her father sided with Duke Constantine. "I have no wish to command, even if I had now the right to do so," he says, in answer ; "but I look upon the difficulty of finding a suitable person to fill the post you mention as a misfortune. Every human being, and more especially those of our rank, has need of help from others, both in small as well as in great things, and for a princess the need is of more importance."

He writes a second time, urging her to choose one or two ladies, if possible, to have always about her,—people whom she could trust. “You can only find out,” he says (evidently in answer to some objection of hers) “by making the experiment, in whom confidence can be placed. For my part I do not believe that human nature is so black as it is painted; and, as a rule, there are not so many who betray the secrets of those whom they serve—at least, this is not my experience.” This letter concludes with the most tender expressions of fatherly affection. It is somewhat remarkable and bears out what has been said as to the Duke of Brunswick’s conduct as a father, that, from the time of the young duchess’s marriage, a true affection and confidence seems to have existed between father and daughter. And this leads the reader of the very voluminous correspondence to the conclusion that the duke had not any share in the cruel neglect and unkindness, which had poisoned Anna Amalia’s childhood.

We hear nothing more of the lady-in-waiting affair, which naturally fell into the background by reason of so many weightier matters taking

up attention. There were rumours and signs in the air of the coming Seven Years' War, which was only held in abeyance by reason of the death of Frederick the Great's grandmother, the Hanoverian princess, wife to George, Elector of Hanover and King of England. She was also grandmother to Anna Amalia who duly went into mourning for her august relative. The period of mourning had not expired when, on the morning of September 5th, 1757, the joybells of Weimar rang out a right merry peal to announce that a prince had been born to the youthful duke and duchess. The whole town was in a tumult of delight.

New life seemed to come into the face of the dying duke, whose heart was bound up in his young wife, her influence being now omnipotent. It did not much matter that Minister Büнау, who exercised dictatorial right over the sickly prince, came often to the castle and showed the draft of the will he had begun to prepare; "for," said he to the duke, "now that an heir is born to succeed, the question of the guardianship *must* be settled." And then came the usual platitudes, such as are made to do duty when a sick man

is asked to make his last dispositions. Duke Constantine understood, for he knew full well that he was in truth sick unto death. Therefore when Büнау produced from his pocket the draft he had prepared, and, sitting opposite to the sofa where lay the pale-faced duke, proceeded to read out his proposals, the first of which was that the newly born prince should have as guardians the Duchess Amalia and Frederick V., King of Denmark, he knew well and so did Constantine, that this was equivalent, although it was not so stated, to making Büнау co-regent with the duchess. And where would the duchess be with such a coadjutor?

Büнау on this occasion reckoned without his host, or rather he under-estimated alike the love of the duke for his young wife and the capacity the latter possessed in matters of business. He went away quite content with the draft of the will in his pocket. He had it engrossed, duly signed and sealed, locked it up in his safe, and then waited the course of events, the whole business being finished by February 21st, 1758.

A few more months went by. The little Prince had been baptized Karl August. He was

now five months old, had a little gilt sleigh in which he was driven over the ice and, being a strong, sturdy baby, he clapped his hands with delight. But his sickly father lay on the sofa in his sitting-room, shivering under a weight of furs. No doubt the cold hand of death was already upon him. He lingered on till May came, and then, when the leaves were beginning to sprout and tokens of summer were at hand, the feeble flicker of life suddenly stopped, and poor Constantine looked his last on his young wife and baby boy.

On the day of his decease, in fact, only a few hours later, Count Büнау called together a council (as is necessary on such occasions), and to them read the will, which he had locked up in his bureau, and with the provisions of which we are acquainted. When the reading was concluded the *kammerdiener* (groom of the chambers) of the deceased duke entered the Council Chamber, and presented to Minister von Büнау a sealed packet with the following superscription:—

“We, Ernest Augustus Constantine, Duke of Saxe Weimar and Eisenach, do hereby order by this undertaking that this our last codicil or dis-



position which has been executed, signed and delivered by us, on this February the 28th, 1758, shall be read publicly on the day of our decease. Given at Wilhelmsburg, March 22nd, 1758."

The codicil was then read aloud, the dispositions therein set forth causing the utmost astonishment. The King of Denmark's office was limited to a mere honorary guardianship over the young duke, Anna Amalia being appointed sole guardian of her son, with the duke of Brunswick as joint guardian until the duchess reached the age of twenty-one.

The Council was still more amazed to find a "conclusion" from the emperor added to the codicil, stating that the duchess had accepted the guardianship of the hereditary prince on the condition that His Majesty the King of Poland, as Elector of Saxony, would accept the office of co-trustee; which office His Majesty had accepted in writing, and was therefore dispensed from being sworn as trustee or guardian.

The consternation caused by this last clause of the codicil was universal. Nothing but mischief could come of such a choice as the Elector of Saxony for guardian. Each one asked the other

who could have counselled such an injudicious step. The private secretary of Minister von Büнау, Fritsch, writing to his father, tells him that the report in Weimar was that this codicil had been drawn up by Assistant Counsellor Nonne, who was suspected of having influenced both the duke and duchess, and had acted in this underhand manner in order to advance himself.

The immediate result of the codicil was to throw ministerial and official business into the utmost confusion, as nothing could be done without the signature of the duchess, and that was valueless so long as she was under age (she was just nineteen). It was necessary either that the duke, her father, should act, or that an application should be made to the emperor to extend to her the *veniam ætatis*, or majority. Now came a new surprise. On this motion being made, a conclusion was put in by the court advocate to the effect that the emperor had six months previously, August 1758, granted to the duchess the *veniam ætatis*.

This *coup d'état* completely annihilated Büнау and his party, their only remaining chance being to raise a clamour as to the Elector of Saxony, whose appointment as guardian was unpopular with

all classes in Weimar. It might well be said : "*Que diable allait il faire dans cette galère ?*" Nothing but mischief could ensue from his intermeddling, especially at this critical moment, when he was at war with Prussia. "No, we will have nothing to do with the Elector, or we too will be dragged into his quarrels." So said the magnates of Hildburghausen, of Coburg, of Saalfeld, of Meiningen, and of Gotha. The Duke of Brunswick in alarm writes to Büнау. Büнау, sulky at his defeat, says Vienna is resolved that the Elector shall remain guardian. Vienna is bombarded with petitions from all parts of Weimar, Eisenach, Gotha, etc., praying that the Elector may be set aside. But Vienna is obstinate ; the Elector must stand. In despair Büнау is approached. Will he not use his powers of persuasion ? And Büнау yields. Not to Austria, but to Denmark does he turn for help, and gets it. The personal influence of King Frederick brings about the desired release from the dreaded danger, and the resignation of the Elector restores confidence to Weimar and the surrounding states. But there is still Vienna to be accounted with. She will want *her* price for yielding, and this price will

be help against the advance of the Prussian Army—the army of her uncle Frederick, to whom the girl regent looked for powerful help.

No wonder the young heart felt weary of her load of troubles. She must have made a pathetic picture, sitting at her council-table with grave, elderly men around her, her fair head covered with a long crêpe veil reaching to the ground, the sign of her widowed state. Not often has a girl in her teens, such weighty matters laid before her. And as we think of her we recall another picture nearly a century later, when another young princess was roused from her sleep in the early dawn of a summer's morning, to hear that greatness had come to her and that she was Queen of England.

Although Anna Amalia's responsibilities as regent of a little duchy may not compare with the cares of a great empire, still the burden laid upon each of these two was more nearly equal than might at first sight appear. Amalia's lack of money and friends at this juncture should be thrown into the balance, making her charge more heavy. She had plenty of courage and a superabundant energy. It was a strong character, that of this little duchess, and its force and

decision are eminently remarkable in her struggle with Minister von Büнау, who, having been disappointed in his ambitious attempt to become ruler of the duchy, now tried to place Weimar altogether under the thumb of Austria. This was not a loyal act, and in the young regent's mind it discounted the service the minister had done in the matter of the Elector of Saxony.

When, later, the doubts she entertained of the minister's sincerity were no longer mere suspicions, but became in her opinion certainties, the duchess resolved to act. On a trifling contradiction taking place between her and the minister, she wrote him a letter, hurriedly put together, conveying the impression that she had lost her confidence in him and that his retirement would be pleasing to her. Büнау at once recognised that he could not, with regard to his own dignity, retain office any longer, and sent in his resignation.

One can easily understand that, although Amalia had brought about this event, she was a little afraid of the consequences of her own act. In her letter announcing the news to her father, she puts forward the plea that Büнау had em-

bittered the last days of her husband by his overbearing and insatiable love of power. Duke Karl passes this by as childish nonsense, and practically tells his daughter he washes his hands of the mess she has got into ; if she won't follow his advice and ask the minister to withdraw his resignation, he, the duke, will do nothing. But Amalia has a spirit, and she will not "knuckle under"; she "takes the responsibility of what may happen" and accepts the great man's resignation, who accordingly packs his trunks and retires in high dudgeon.¹

¹ Count Bütau did not leave Saxony. He lived for some years on one of his estates not far from Weimar, and from a letter preserved in the state archives it is evident Anna Amalia availed herself of his counsels, although apparently he took no part in the government. The letter in question is addressed to her uncle, Frederick the Great, who at this date, 1761, had entered on the Seven Years' War. It is an urgent appeal in favour of the count, who, she says, "is advanced in years, suffering from terrible illness and unable to fulfil the contracts he had made to supply the advancing army with forage and other necessaries." She adds, "I have the more willingly undertaken to intercede with you for the count, as, although he is no longer attached to our service, still he continues to receive a considerable pension, for which he undertakes to give us his valuable advice and the benefit of his experience upon many different points. I greatly desire that he should remain in this neighbourhood in perfect security; and I therefore beg Your Majesty to render me this personal service by

"There, you see what comes of putting girls out of the nursery into important positions," cried all the wiseacres of Weimar; but they did not know the soul that animated the childish form of the little duchess. She braced herself to the work before her and looked her responsibilities in the face. The first and most necessary duty was to replace Büнау. Fortunately, Geheimerath von Rhediger, who, by right of being the most important member of the Cabinet or Council, now succeeded to the post of minister, was a man of great sense and judgment,¹ no cavil could be made against him; but the sudden elevation and favour bestowed upon the assistant Geheimerath Nonne was something to set the gossips in Weimar talking. It was well known that the secret codicil, which had been sprung upon the ministers, had

giving the necessary orders to protect him while he resides in Saxony from being subjected to any bad treatment, such as being made prisoner or otherwise. I need not say that by so doing Your Majesty will confer on me an obligation for which I shall be everlastingly grateful, and with the assurance of my respect and affection."

This letter is addressed to the care of M. Keller, Commandant at Leipzig.

¹ Geheimerath in the German Cabinet holds the same position as Privy Councillor. A Geheimerath had a seat at the Privy Council but not an assistant Geheimerath.

been the work of Nonne; and here was now his reward—promotion over the heads of his colleagues as second minister and adviser to the duchess-regent.

All this talk and gossip, which was inevitable in so small a place as Weimar, was annoying to the duchess, who, for the rest, had many anxieties on her mind. She must have missed the devotion of her young husband, who had shown his love and confidence in so remarkable a manner. The cares and anxieties of life had come all too early on one so young and inexperienced. As she writes in her *Gedanken* :

“Never did I pray with such devotion as I did in this my hour of need. I believe I might have become a saint. The situation was indeed peculiar. So young to be regent, to command, to rule, I, who all my life had been humiliated, depressed.” And then she adds with great frankness : “I am afraid that after a little time I began to look upon my position with a certain amount of vanity. But a secret voice whispered : ‘Beware!’ I heard it, and my better reason came to my help. Truth and self-love struggled for the mastery, and truth prevailed.”

On September 8th, 1758, the duchess gave birth to a son, who was named after his father, Constantine. This event seems to have infused new life and spirit into the young mother, who rose up from her trial full of zeal and determination to do her duty towards her children and her subjects to the best of her capacity.

CHAPTER II

THE first use Amalia made of her recovery was to commence the work which she had planned on her sick-bed. She was resolved to make herself and her little duchy a feature of the century. We find in a letter to her father this determination distinctly expressed "that every ruler owes to the country which he governs the duty of raising it to a higher position ;" and she goes on to instance Prussia and her father's Duchy of Brunswick. That Weimar should win a special reputation for refinement and culture was her ambition.

We generally find that those who have a steady purpose, nearly always reach the goal they have in view, and so it fell out with Amalia, whose dearest wishes were in the end realised. But not for many years did the fruition come. Meantime she tells us how she studied day and night to make herself mistress of her new duties. "I

longed for success—for praise. I also felt the absolute need I had of a friend, in whom I could place entire confidence. There were several who sought to be my confidants or my advisers. Some tried flattery, others commended themselves by a show of sincerity, but in none could I detect the ring of true affection which is above all temptations.” And then the duchess adds these remarkable words: “If a prince and the individual he selects as an intimate or confidant are *both* noble-minded, the sincerest affection may exist between them; and this is the only way to answer the question, ‘Can kings have true friends?’ ”

Amalia had indeed need of a good friend and counsellor to guide her over a very slippery road, where a false step was easily made. There can hardly be a parallel found in history of so heavy a burden being laid upon such young shoulders.

The condition of the duchy was deplorable: the treasury was empty, agriculture neglected; the upper classes were extravagant, whilst the people were miserably poor and discontented. She had to face the heavy task of bringing order into the general disorder, of replenishing by some means

the empty exchequer, of giving her subjects a measure of education, of providing hospitals for the sick and asylums for the aged poor.

What a task for a girl under twenty ! Anna Amalia naturally looked to her ministers, and especially to Nonne, for assistance. She had given him many marks of favour. He was now called Herr von Nonne, and enjoyed the position of Geheimerath, or Privy Councillor. But he was not a satisfactory minister. It is difficult, as it generally is in such cases, to grasp what the cause of his falling into disfavour actually was. One account represents his disgrace to have been due to his answer to his royal mistress's demand for an increased vote, for the maintenance of the court and the court ceremonials, which the master of the ceremonies, Von Witzleden, had estimated at 1,253 thalers. "Could not the country afford this yearly sum to keep up its duchess?" asked the young regent. Von Nonne went too far, when in his reply he said: "Your highness's poor subjects are drained of the last halfpenny they earn by the sweat of their brow, to supply luxuries and display, at the court of the best princess in the world." A pretty manner of

expressing yourself, Herr von Nonne, but not pleasing to your gracious princess.

Close on this friction came what was called the "Pro Memoria,"¹ issued by Amalia to her ministers, in which she announced her intention to see into all matters of state business herself, and to give her signature to every document, first having read and approved the contents.

At the next sitting of the Council, however, a respectful amendment was made to the "Pro Memoria," by which Her Serene Highness was limited in the matter of her signature to such papers as had to do with foreign powers, or memorials, etc.; all others were to go through the usual routine. This limitation of her authority was not pleasing to the duchess. It soon became evident that neither Geheimerath von Rhediger nor Geheimerath von Nonne had succeeded in obtaining her confidence or friendship. This privilege was conferred upon a third member of the cabinet, Greiner, to whom the duchess-regent had been first attracted by the fact that he

¹ The "Pro Memoria" is a very long document, which I have spared my readers. It can, however, be found in the archives at Weimar.

had been tutor to her young husband, who had given him the rank of Assistant Geheimerath. In 1761, during Amalia's guardianship, he was raised to that of Geheimerath, and in 1763 a decree of the emperor elevated him to the peerage.

In her *Gedanken*, Anna Amalia speaks of the character of Greiner with warm admiration. "I found at last in this noble-minded man the treasure which all of us seek but few find—the treasure which is greater than gold or silver, a true friend. A true friend! How happy I was to possess such an one! And now how glad I am to speak of this excellent man and to let the world know what obligations he has conferred upon me. His name is Greiner, his rank Privy Councillor. He was not a great genius, but a thoughtful man, gifted with much intelligence. He had worked his way up from the bottom, so that he was conversant with every department of affairs. Just and delicate feeling animated him, and he was capable of sincere friendship. He was the friend of his friend; and his soul being animated with the loftiest feelings, there was no room for the ignoble vice of flattery. This was the character of the man into whose arms

I threw myself. I loved him as if he were my father, and like a child I sat at his feet. From him have I heard the truth, and from him have I learned to love it."

Such expressions as "into whose arms I threw myself," "his soul was animated," etc., belong to the high-flown style of the day, which was all sentiment. Even the healthy, joyous mind of the duchess was tinged with a *souffçon*, or breath, of this mock sentimentality.

It must not be thought, however, that Amalia had devolved the cares of the duchy on Greiner. The energetic princess followed to the letter the programme she had sketched in the "Pro Memoria."

"The Regent, following the example of her honoured and gracious father, will not spare herself any trouble or pains, but will look into everything with her own eyes, and hear every one's complaints with her own ears. She will be present at the sittings of the council; and, during the time when it is not in session, she will receive reports in writing or by word of mouth, and give to each one attention, consult over them with her advisers and judge accordingly."

And, as the "Memoria," so was the daily programme of the regent, who went through every detail of state business, foreign or otherwise. The clear, sensible eyes of the youthful regent examined carefully into the workings of every department, and while the intelligent and quick penetration she possessed went to the bottom of every intrigue, her small, energetic hands, with narrow, pointed fingers, were ready to work at all hours for the good of the people. And none the less well did she govern her duchy, because she cared little for the opinion of men, so long as she had the consciousness that she was doing her duty.

She had a difficult part to play; and those who counselled her, deserved infinite credit for the manner in which they directed her policy through the troubled years of the Seven Years' War,—that nightmare "which pursued her even in her sleep." On one side there was Austria, who considered Amalia owed her gratitude for the help she had received in the matter of the Elector of Saxony and King of Poland; on the other hand, the ties of blood and the feeling of veneration Amalia had from childhood entertained for her uncle, Frederick the Great (whom she

resembled both in looks and character) drew her irresistibly to his side. Fortunately, by the prudence of her ministers and the pity her youth and widowed condition excited, Weimar came out of the long struggle with small hurt. On more than one occasion Amalia stood up bravely in defence of her little duchy.

It is certain that, in her appreciation of Greiner, she in no way overestimated his services. Without his advice and ever ready co-operation, it would have been impossible for one, so young and inexperienced as Amalia was, to have steered her course through such a sea of difficulty. Unlike the preceding ministers, Greiner gave his full approbation to her plans for improving the duchy. The country was undoubtedly impoverished, and the approaching war was likely still further to drain its resources; but still, with economy (and for so great a purpose, he felt sure the duchess would herself set an example) much might be accomplished. Here was diplomacy on the part of Minister Greiner, and good results followed therefrom. The duchess, delighted at having a friendly collaborator in her schemes, set to work with zeal. Weimar, the capital of the duchy,

wanting in all necessities of a capital, should be taken in hand first. In truth it needed supervision. There was the lighting of the streets. Since 1732 Weimar had been lighted by lanterns, which were carried for the higher classes by their servants, who walked before their masters ; or, if of lower rank, by the persons themselves. There were few private carriages, and the principal conveyance, for ladies especially, was the sedan chair, or *chaise à porteurs*. This method of getting about had this inconvenience, that, as the chairman also exercised the office of watchman, he often deposited the chair and its occupant on the pavement, while he proceeded to perform the duty of crying out the time of night in a leisurely manner.

There were graver matters that required immediate attention. There was a pressing need for schools for the children, for additions to the public library, and for making some sort of attempt at a museum.

Anna Amalia courageously set to work, beginning with the library. This had already been the object of much interest to the earlier Dukes of Weimar.¹ It had, however, been of late years neglected. Now

¹ See Introduction.

it was rearranged. The shelves in the library at Wilhelmsburg were denuded of their books, which were carted down to the library for which they had been originally intended, and where they made a goodly show.¹ This was Anna Amalia's work.²

Now for the school. In the *Gymnasium Illustre* there were three hundred and twenty pupils who had only seven teachers and two unpaid assistants. In the school for the nobility there was a preceptor who received thirty gulden yearly, the stipend of a mere village schoolmaster in England. Measures were taken to set this matter right, but it nevertheless took considerable time. Herder, who came many years later to Weimar, found that the masters in the *Gymnasium*, after thirty-one years of study, had not got through the New Testament.

But if Weimar was not altogether satisfactory, Jena filled the heart of the young duchess with pride. There the court had long been patrons of learning and art; it was a bright spot or beacon, which led the duchess forward in her task of bringing Weimar to a similar standard of

¹ These books were placed in the Residenz of Wilhelmsburg by Leonard Schurzfleisch. See Introduction.

² For an account of the grand ducal library see Appendix, vol. ii.

excellence. The reputation of the learned body of professors in Jena remains to the present day ; but it is not too much to say that, well-founded as this reputation was, Jena owed something to the interest taken and the assistance given by Anna Amalia, whose early training in her father's house had imbued her with a deep reverence for knowledge in all its branches. The professors of the Jena University were made welcome at Weimar, where they found in this girlish duchess an intelligent sympathiser in the intellectual developments in progress. Her bright face as she listened to their grave discourse, and eager co-operation so far as her limited means went, acted as an incentive and spur to their zeal for the diffusion of knowledge.

Unfortunately, the means at her disposal, were not in these early days of her regency, equal to her desire to do universal good. Nevertheless, by the prudent management of Geheimerath Greiner, who had cut down all useless expenses, and the careful administration of the ducal household—a task undertaken by the duchess, who looked into the smallest items and *contracted no debts*—economies were effected which left a small sum

(small in view of the expenditure of royal courts now-a-days) available for the objects this girl of barely twenty years old had at heart.

Four hundred thalers does not represent more than £60 of English money ; a small sum (it would now be termed a pittance) wherewith to start collections of statuary, pictures, books, and *objets d'art*. It is a great thing, however, to know precisely what you want, and not to be led astray into wider fields. Amalia possessed this somewhat rare quality ; and in reading her correspondence with artists, both in France and Italy, and with friends who travelled in far countries, one is surprised at the clearness and decision with which she makes known exactly what she wants and what she will pay. It must also be said that, in the matter of friends, she was blessed to a degree not very usual in persons of her rank. Those who assisted her did their work in a remarkable manner ; and to them was, in a measure, due the success which attended her efforts to educate the people committed to her care. It was no doubt trying to a young, enthusiastic nature like Amalia's, to find herself curbed and thwarted by the necessary economy she had to practise. In

a letter to her father dated 1763 she complains bitterly that she is obliged, in consequence of the strain of the war, to give out of her private purse eight thousand thalers to pay the expenses of the court. She lays the blame on Witzleben, the Comptroller, "who allows the lower class of servants to pillage as much as they like, and when reproved gets on his high horse and is offended." She has made up her mind (stout-hearted little woman!) to get rid of him. But then comes a prudent answer from Duke Karl. "No, my daughter, you must not get rid of Witzleben; it would raise disturbance. Wait awhile, have patience, in time all will go well." And so the young, impetuous heart curbed itself, and we do not hear what happened to the "unjust steward."

The impression made on her own people by Amalia's goodness and extraordinary capacity for governing (which was the more remarkable from her youth and sex) was confirmed by the respect she commanded from foreign nations, to whom the reputation of this young and "wonderful duchess" came, from travellers as well as from other sources. Also, at the Court of Brunswick, where she had been in her youth humiliated and

despised, now that it was known that the great king, her Uncle Frederick, had said she was too good for the land over which she was duchess, a complete change took place and she was honoured by all.

“God preserve thee for the happiness of thy country and thy family,” writes Anna Amalia’s brother, the hereditary Prince Karl II. of Brunswick (December 20th, 1759). “Thou art adored by thy subjects, Heaven has bestowed on thee her choicest blessings, and thou hast only to continue in the same course and no misfortune will come to thee. May Heaven grant that this unhappy war may cease.”

According to the portrait of her person given by another of her brothers, Prince Frederick Augustus of Brunswick, Anna Amalia was not handsome, or even decidedly pretty ; nevertheless “she gave the impression that she *was* handsome. In her first youth, especially, she charmed by the bright expression of her full round face, which was lit up by remarkably brilliant eyes, like stars, which could soften at will into the sweetest and most loving tenderness. A Roman nose (which others, not blinded by fraternal affection, called a Brunswick

nose, inherited from papa, but slightly softened in height and ponderosity), a beautiful profile (some people called it more ; a strong-minded, energetic profile, with the aquiline Brunswick nose, again reminiscent of papa), and the sharp pointed little chin, reminiscent of mamma. She is not tall, but looks taller than she is from her elegant proportions."

The affectionate brother then gives a detailed description of the beauties of the duchess's mind, which surpassed those of her person. "Her modesty is one of her greatest charms ; and, although she is all gentleness, she has the courage and firmness of a man. She listens to the advice of experience, but is a slave to no one. She gives generously, but never allows herself to be importuned. Her temper is lively and her will is strong, but every emotion of her mind is subject to the dictates of reason. Slow in making friends, she is steadfast and constant. She cares not to listen to gossip ; she is a distinguished musician, and her talent has been cultivated in the best school. In her relations to her children she is ideal."¹

¹ It is unnecessary to quote further from the long fraternal eulogy which lies before me. Family admiration does not count

Brothers are not always so alive to their sister's perfections as was Frederick Augustus ; but he had a literary turn, which accounts for his exaggerated style. Putting this aside, his testimony is worth having. Another member of the family also bears witness to the feelings entertained by the people of Weimar for their duchess. "They adore her," he writes on one occasion.

Her correspondence with her uncle, Frederick the Great, preserved in the state archives at Weimar, is most interesting, and exhibits both the great king and the little duchess (his niece), in a most favourable light. The feeding of the large army of Frederick, and the recruiting which was carried on extensively, were the two great causes of complaint. The last named

for much, and English readers especially like to draw their own conclusions, although a biographer may direct his readers' attention, as a barrister directs a jury to his client's case ; for, after all, a biography means nothing, if not a fair trial, "from bias free and prejudice." And here we are brought face to face with the question whether the present method of autobiography or memoirs written during the lifetime of the man or woman can have much real value. It seems to me that if such inanimate things as pictures, china, wine, gain in value and become mellow with years ; so too a man's life, his failures, his successes, his infirmities, require the softening touch of death, before they are laid in all their bareness before a cold, cynical world.

especially excited Amalia's indignation. Her first letter to the Prussian king, dated February 1759, deals with this point, and is written in very spirited terms.

“SIRE,

“A requisition has been made to me by Monsieur d'Anhalt to furnish him with 150 recruits for your army. Your Majesty knows too well my feelings of respect and affection to doubt my submission to any order of Your Majesty's, but Your Royal Highness is too merciful to command me to do what would cause the ruin of the country over which I have to govern.

“Your Majesty will call to mind the violence with which the Imperial Court has forced us to supply contingents to the army of the so-called Empire. Nevertheless we have managed to evade this order as much as possible and have only sent as few men as we could spare. If I am obliged to furnish the 150 recruits asked for by d'Anhalt, I must take them from the plough and from the workshops, which will infallibly cause the total ruin of a country as near annihilation

as it can be. This terrible situation has induced me to oppose the demands made by Vienna, which, during the last three months, has been pressing me to complete the before-mentioned contingent. I do not deny, Sire, that it was my reliance on your goodness that gave me strength boldly to refuse the demands of Austria; and now I implore you to grant your protection to this my unfortunate and ruined country. I beseech Your Majesty to cancel the order for the levy of the before-named 150 recruits and to believe that I shall return this great favour by the most grateful affection. These sentiments have, in fact, filled my heart since my early childhood when I was first made aware that I had the honour of belonging to you, and these feelings will remain in my heart as long as I continue to live."

To this letter are attached the different appellations and titles of the Duchess Regent: "By God's grace Anna Amalia Duchess of Saxony, Cleves and Berg, also of Engern and Westphalia; by birth Duchess of Brunswick and Lüneburg, Countess of Thuringia, Markgräfin of Meissen, Royal Countess of Henneberg, Countess of Mark

and Ravensberg, Frau of Rasenstein, Guardian
and Regent of the country,

“Your Majesty’s

“humble and submissive

“Niece, God-daughter and Servant,

“AMALIA.”

In Eisenach the inhabitants suffered sorely from the exactions of *both* armies, which were constantly passing through this district. Amalia, accompanied by Von Nonne, visited Eisenach and greatly cheered the spirits of the inhabitants by the glad tidings that, by her influence, Frederick had given up the idea of besieging the town. She could not, however, free her duchy from the constant exactions of the recruiting officers. On one occasion the duchess, having got timely notice that one of these, Lieutenant Reim, was coming to Weimar to lay his hands on every man and boy in the place, advised the young men to conceal themselves in the woods; and with true motherly care gave them warm cloaks lest they should catch cold. After this *coup d'état* we find her writing to His Majesty the King of Prussia.

“As I told Your Majesty, we have absolutely

no young men, and Reim has taken decrepit old men and aged farmers; and, when he found there were no young or strong men to be got, he said he would proceed to extremities. I have too much confidence in Your Majesty's goodness to believe that you will allow him to act in such a manner. I implore you to be merciful towards me and my unhappy people. March 20th, 1761. *I await with impatience Your Majesty's reply."*

The answer from the king came ordering that the duchess should be treated with consideration, and her duchy spared as much as possible; but that the necessary recruits must be got. Also the duchess must not believe *everything* told to her; as, in war-time, many irregularities would naturally take place.

Soon, however, worse things came to pass. In November 1762 a "bureau of Directors" had been established in Saxony, which had for its principal object the levy of troops. From Weimar four hundred men were demanded. Out of all patience at this horrible tyranny, Amalia again has recourse to her pen. She writes an imploring letter begging that this terribly cruel recruiting may be stopped. She calls almost hysterically upon her

uncle to save her poor harassed subjects ; and this time the king replies in a letter dated Meissen, November 30th, 1762.

“MADAM MY NIECE,

“I have just received the letter you were good enough to write to me on the 28th. However well disposed to comply with your Highness’s request, I cannot in this case, when my need for recruits is so urgent, that it is quite impossible for me to cancel the order for recruiting in Weimar.

“I flatter myself that, when you take into consideration that recruits are the only demand I have made on Weimar, you will realise that this demand cannot compare with the burdens which would have been imposed upon your duchy and the inconveniences your subjects would have suffered if, under different circumstances, the Austrians or their allies had occupied winter quarters in your duchy. I also beg Your Highness to remember that it is only out of consideration for *yourself* that I gave orders that, with the exception of the recruits, no other levy should be made on Weimar, and my esteem and friendship for you will always continue, etc., etc.”

Poor harassed little duchess ! It was well for the great king, her uncle, to talk of what might have happened if Austria had occupied winter quarters. Did not that much offended nation, which considered it had been tricked badly in the matter of the Elector of Saxony, threaten to force her to pay an exorbitant indemnity for not keeping faith ; a threat which the Duke of Brunswick, her father, characterises as an instance of the hard-heartedness produced by this accursed war ? There seemed no refuge on any side except, perhaps, in Uncle Frederick ; and so she continues to apply to him on every occasion, with a childlike confidence that at last seems to have secured his friendship.

From this time the relations between uncle and niece become most cordial. Anna Amalia sends fruit from the gardens of Belvedere, which pleases the king ; who in return sends what he calls a trifling present, but is really a royal gift which evidently much delights the duchess, from her rapturous letter of thanks. At different intervals we find her visiting the great king at Potsdam and Berlin, at which court she made a lasting friendship with the Landgräfin of Hesse Darmstadt

Caroline Henrietta, called the Great on account of qualities of her mind. There is no doubt that Anna Amalia gained much from her intercourse with the Landgräfin, and, as we shall see later, this friendship led to a closer connection between the duchies of Weimar and Hesse Darmstadt.

We left Amalia fighting the battle for her little duchy, which was in truth nearing total extinction when, at the critical moment, the joyful news came of the cessation of the cruel and never-to-be-forgotten seven years of suffering that Germany had gone through valiantly. To add to Amalia's happiness she had the joy of receiving Uncle Frederick at Weimar, on his homeward journey, and presenting to him her children. With the young Karl August the great king was well pleased, prophesying that he had the makings of a fine soldier and good ruler, if only niece Amalia did not make a milksop of him ; and Amalia, overflowing with pride at this praise of her boy, promised she would be guided in all things by Uncle Frederick, and so the visit ended happily. Peace was made and hopes of coming prosperity were in all minds ; the duchess, for the first time since her marriage, made a short

journey from home and visited Aix-la-Chapelle, then the fashionable watering-place, which was resorted to by crowned heads and princes. The journey there must have been somewhat perilous ; for, in a letter home, she expresses astonishment that she arrived at her journey's end without breaking an arm or a leg, and more surprised still that her *berline* had held out through such a journey. The letter in which these expressions occur is written in gay spirits, and ends with her compliments to the court circle.

On her return Weimar gave its duchess a warm welcome. She was met by a torchlight procession, and serenaded by the school children. The pleasure of feeling that she was understood and loved, by those for whom she had done so much, gratified the youthful duchess. Her return home was, however, saddened by the loss of one whom she prized, not only for his valuable services, but also for his warm friendship for her and her children. That princes do not have many sincere friends is unfortunately too true ; but in Greiner the duchess-regent had one who never swerved from his duty towards her. She had, in many ways, shown her appreciation of this friendship. On

more than one occasion Greiner, who was advanced in years, had petitioned Anna Amalia to allow him to retire from office. This request she, on the first occasion, absolutely refused to grant.

Greiner, however, after a short interval renewed his demand and this time couched the request in such pressing terms that the duchess, in great distress of mind, took counsel with the minister's colleague, von Fritsch, who, since Herr von Nonne's death in 1762, had been advanced to a place in the Cabinet. In her letter to Fritsch she talks of the services her aged minister had rendered to her, and to the duchy she had been called to govern ; of his devotion to her interest and to the country generally ; of the order he had brought into the disorder he had found ; and of the irreparable loss it would be to her if she were robbed of the help of this able counsellor, especially in times when men from day to day grew more and more hard to fathom.

She then goes on to say that the thought had come to her mind to propose to pay his debts, although she was not instructed as to their amount ; but that could be easily ascertained ; or at least to return to him the bond for six

hundred thalers¹ which he had signed on borrowing that sum a few years previous. At the last sitting of the Council this same proposal had been started by some of the members, but it had been opposed by others, and there the matter had rested.

"I suppose," she adds, "that I, as regent, have the power to give an order on the Treasury for the return of the bond to Minister von Greiner."

Von Fritsch with great astuteness replied : "Greiner has certainly *no debts*, being one who always lived within his income. To retain him in the ministry is all important. It would be well to return him the bond for the six hundred thalers, but not from the Treasury : that would make a disturbance, and it would injure Your Royal Highness, if the people thought you conferred favours at the expense of the State. But the sum could be paid from the Privy Purse, over which fund Your Highness has sole authority."

Anna Amalia acted on this suggestion and had the comfort of keeping her good friend and adviser until his death, which occurred in 1765. It can be well imagined she missed the counsel of one

¹ About ninety pounds of our money.

so experienced and so devoted to her interests. And at this juncture the loss of Greiner was all the more felt, as a terrible famine spread all over the land, bringing in its train the usual horrors of pestilence of different kinds, which affected not only human beings, but also the cattle and horses, amongst which a terrible mortality took place. The young duke, writing to Minister von Fritsch in July 1771 says :

“My heart is deeply moved by this terrible misfortune, and I would like of all things to give a little help. You would oblige me much, Herr Geheimerath, if you would help me to get my mother’s permission to give 400 thalers out of my own purse, to be divided between the poor in this town, and those in Eisenach. I could not find a better use for my money.” And then he adds what one must think was a suggestion of his tutor’s : “A Prince’s sole happiness should be in doing good.”

The plague of famine and sickness lasted a couple of years ; for we find the distinguished Italian writer, Micheless, writing in 1773 : “Sadness hangs over Weimar, and those who escape from the town do not escape the fatal illness, which

pursues them wherever they go." And then he pays a high compliment to Anna Amalia: "A princess whose fine qualities and the wisdom of whose government are acknowledged by the whole world."

Anna Amalia possessed to a wonderful extent the art (one not born with all princes) which is much prized by the German race, that of representation—a word which possesses a wide meaning. On Sundays the regent showed herself to the people in the garden of the old castle of Wilhelmsburg called the Welsche Garten. This garden was extensive ; it was laid out in the French fashion—somewhat after the pattern of Versailles—with broad, straight walks, or alleys, extending south, east and west. There were four-cornered beds of flowers, canals with rustic bridges, a Babylonian watch-tower, with a spiral staircase, while the many walks were inviting for lovers' rambles or pleasant picnics.¹ On Sundays the duchess walked in the broad alleys ; the court marshal went before her, pages carried her train. After them came the tall halberdiers and a dwarf. She fed the goldfish

¹ The now lovely park was a wilderness situated to the left of the Welsche Garten.

in the pond, and drank tea in the grotto of the Guard house.

In winter the Sunday programme was different. A procession of court sleighs drove through the streets, each sleigh being driven by a gentleman, who sat behind the ladies. Before each sleigh rode an outrider, and on short winter afternoons the drive was generally to Tiefurt or Ettersburg, where tea would be taken, the company returning by torchlight. Or, again, the duchess, dressed in a long-skirted riding habit, green or black, and mounted on a white horse, rode through the streets. The people gazed at her in admiration; her small feet causing the greatest wonder. It became the fashion for gentlemen to wear on their watch-chains, as a charm, or *breloque*, a tiny gold shoe with a red heel, in imitation of those worn by their beloved duchess. For it was her custom to put on every day a pair of new shoes with red heels which, when once used, were given to the ladies-in-waiting, who wore them, thereby inflicting on their poor feet unspeakable suffering.

At the theatre (where it was the custom for none but the court party to applaud) the duchess appeared in a cloak of different coloured silks,

which was thrown over her dress and had long falling sleeves.

In the delightful description of Weimar and its little court, given by Lewes, there is an account of the gaieties of the season,

“This evening there was a *redoute* (entertainment ball) at the Court House, the tickets being one gulden each. The Court party arrived at eight o'clock. The duchess was splendid in a domino, and was set off by some fine jewels. She danced with a light step really beautifully, and with much dignity. The young princes, who wore fancy dresses as Zephyr and Cupid, also danced well. The masquerade was very crowded and animated, and there were a number of masks. There was also a faro table, the smallest stake half a gulden; the duchess never put down less than half a louis d'or, but she liked to dance better than to play, and remained at the table only a short time. She danced with every mask who was presented to her, and remained till nearly three o'clock. Then all was nearly over.

“At another *redoute* the duchess was dressed as a Grecian queen—a very splendid costume which became her well. This was an exceptionally

brilliant affair, and the room was crowded. Some students from Jena were present, this being the last *redoute* of the season. The duchess sent me one of her own Savoyard costumes. I was dressed by the Countess von Görtz. Her maid dressed my hair like a lady's, and, together with the young Count von Görtz, who was also dressed in female costume, I presented myself at court, dined, and went with the duchess's party to the *redoute*, where we stayed till six o'clock in the morning."

Let us listen for a moment to Henrietta von Eggloffstein's account of the change effected by the young duchess, whose unfortunate position she at one time deplored so feelingly, for having her lot cast among a set of ignorant creatures, who didn't understand French, the language of good society, which Anna Amalia was accustomed to hear at the "polite" Court of Brunswick.

"Amalia's creative spirit," says Henrietta, "and her pure mind have cast a spell over these people, who did not appear to have a spark of higher aspirations, or a desire to rise above their surroundings, but were quite happy in their intellectual degradation. Like Prometheus Amalia has kindled

heavenly fire, and has given a higher life to her subjects. She has drawn round her the youth of both sexes, made them her companions in pleasant and elegant festivities ; wherein refined and elegant amusements, such as music, charades and figure dances, have taken the place of the vulgar games and rough horseplay which disgraced the court. Amalia sought out those who were distinguished for any talent or accomplishment, and made these welcome, so that they felt at ease ; for she was accomplished in the art of giving every one their right place, and, there being no such thing as restraint or stiffness in her drawing-room, every one was natural and unrestrained. So she learnt to know each person well."

"It must be acknowledged," adds Henrietta, "that she had her favourites, whose faults she excused ; and this sometimes gave rise to unkind reports, such as that she overstepped the rigid limits which separate the classes, and that knowledge and talent were a better passport to her favour than old lineage or rank."

CHAPTER III

I HAVE now to introduce two little personages —Duke Ernst Karl August and Prince Constantine. Karl August, the elder by twelve months and the future Duke of Weimar, was possessed of a royal will of his own and a distinct sense of his importance. In Ettersburg there is a portrait of this baby duke in his baby frock, his round little face full of childish obstinacy. "A handful," the nurses called him. "A naughty wicked boy!" cried his *gouvernante*, whose face he scratched, to Amalia's distress. The duchess wrote to tell her usual counsellor, Duke Karl, who, when he read how his grandson had gone to bed without his supper, because he would not apologise to mademoiselle, rapped out an oath which consigned mademoiselle and a much higher person to a hot place. "Those women will spoil as fine a little fellow as ever lived," said the boy's grandfather, who had been all severity to his

own children, but could not be severe to the second generation. He writes to his daughter (of whom he now stands a little in awe) that he is sending her a proper person, who has been teaching in the gymnasium at Brunswick, by name J. W. Seidler, and who is a very useful piece of furniture and understands how to manage a boy better than her fool of a mademoiselle. And Amalia, after some "womanish" scruples as to the exact time not having arrived (as mentioned in her husband's will) when Karl August was to be given over to masculine supervision, submits, and Seidler is despatched from Wolfenbüttel.¹

But Seidler did not give satisfaction : his system of education, excellent in some ways, lacked

¹ Amalia was a very fond mother, and at that time had a decided leaning to her youngest boy. Here is a pretty little letter written to baby Constantine, aged two. The duchess's spelling is not very correct:—

"WEIMAR, 1760.

"Bonjour, mon cher petit Constantin. Comment avez vous reposé. Penses-vous à votre chère Maman ? Oui ; sûrement, mon petit Constantin me l'a promis. Je me trouve nullement à mon aise ici ; je n'ai pas autour de moi ce que j'aime le plus dans le monde, devines ce que cela pourrait être, si vous devines que c'est vous même. Vous avez attrapé juste. Aimes-moi toujours, mon petit Contine chérissez-moi avec un attachement le plus tendre et le plus sincère.

"Votre fidèle Mère,

"AMÉLIE."



KARL AUGUST WHEN A CHILD.

[p. 74.]



firmness ; and this was the attribute most necessary in dealing with a nature like the young duke's. Punishment had no effect upon him ; even if Seidler would have resorted to a system which he condemned. He was a man of theories, and one of his theories was very injurious to his pupil ; for he allowed him to grow up with a consciousness of his own elevated rank, a feeling that it gave him privileges not accorded to those beneath him, and that, in fact, it dispensed him from obedience and other lowly virtues. This doctrine was extremely pleasant to the little duke, who became so inflated with the idea of his own greatness as to grow insubordinate and unbearable.

Amalia soon recognised the incapacity of kind, good-natured Seidler. She saw that, with the best will possible, he was incapable of mastering such a proud, obstinate nature as her eldest son possessed. Anxious to do all she could for her child, the duchess first made herself acquainted with every particular of her dead husband's education, and then proceeded to work on the same lines. On May 11th, 1761, she addressed a long letter to the council, in which she detailed her maternal anxiety to do her best to train her



young son in his father's footsteps, and to prepare him to be a good ruler over his dominions. She said that the first step must be to find a proper governor for him, and that she had for some time devoted her whole attention to this point ; the result of her researches being that a certain Count von Görtz appeared to her to have the qualities necessary for so difficult a task. "He is an accomplished gentleman ; he has travelled and speaks French well, but he has a turn for sarcasm."

"Worse than that," reply the members of the Privy Council, "Count Görtz is malicious and his tongue is pungent with satire. This fault is not of grave magnitude in a private individual, but it is a fatal error in a prince. Europe would be at peace to-day if Frederick the Great had restrained a satirical observation."

This objection was put aside and Count Görtz, in accepting office, wrote the following letter, which will not impress the reader with a favourable view of his character.

"The wish to be of some use in the world is the sole motive which has decided me to accept an office which brings with it such heavy responsibilities. I sacrifice to the dear prince my best

years. I deny myself the pleasures of this world and the affectionate intercourse with my family. All obstacles which may cross my path shall be (so far as human foresight can ensure such a result) resisted to the best of my ability."

He then goes on to speak of his plans for the mental training and education of the young duke. "My first care shall be to foster a tender affection and love for his mother." (This would seem to be a somewhat unnecessary assurance.) "After that the prince shall be taught to regard with affection, friendship, and esteem those who are about him in their separate stations and capacities. He must become master of himself; he must consider his high position as a favour bestowed by the Almighty. Good feelings shall be cultivated and flattery, that most poisonous weed, shall be driven away as if it were the plague itself."

The whole strain of this letter "promises too much," and there is a total lack of sincerity; and, as we shall see later, Count von Görtz's system of training was wanting in the very points on which he insists so emphatically.

At the time Görtz entered on his duties he was twenty-five; his pupil was entering his fifth year,

his brother Constantine being still in the nursery. According to the method of education in force in the eighteenth century, Latin was begun by the five-year-old pupil, who learned by heart Ovid's elegies, together with Gellert's fables and the history of the world. How the poor little brain must have been confused! Better training was the fencing lesson, and music lesson to which one hour was given daily. It is a real pleasure to hear that, when Karl was eight years old, he smashed the bow of his violin and the notes of the piano; and had likewise made the walk to Belvedere quite unsafe, by constantly firing off small cannon. Count Görtz uses strong language in detailing these offences; but Amalia, wisely, only laughed. "When the heart is good," she says, "*all* is right. You tell me my little son loves his mother; let us hope for the best."

This making a fuss over a child's naughtiness does not increase one's belief in Count Görtz's capabilities; and presently the duchess's optimistic view proved correct. At nine years Karl became a very good boy, broke no more violins, fired no more cannon; but concentrated his young mind on learning his lessons and "training himself for

his high position." The reader will perhaps exclaim, as I did : " What an odious little prig ! " But, no. I am bound to say the boy duke was a manly little fellow. At this early age he did credit to Görtz, or, rather, to the duchess, whose tenderness had subdued the roughness and softened the obstinacy of the childish nature. Karl August at this time adored his mother. Pity it was that this saving influence ever diminished.

Anna Amalia deserved the love of her children ; she had sacrificed much for their sakes. Especially had she striven to educate Karl August as a German ruler—although such was not the rule at the German Courts, where the French language and foreign manners prevailed. For the rest, Karl August was a clever youth, and he preferred the company of grown up people to companions of his own age. Contemporary writers speak of the astonishing manner, in which he kept on a level with the elder generation.

The time was now approaching when it would be necessary to send the young princes, especially Karl August, to a foreign college. Anna Amalia, whose anxiety to do her duty towards her sons was most praiseworthy, took counsel with those

best able to advise her. Amongst these was an old friend of her youth, the learned Abbot Jerusalem of Brunswick, who was not in favour of university education, either at Geneva, where there was no good system and only a few "*uneducated Englishmen*," or at Strasburg, which was a military *depôt*, where the morals of the princes would be destroyed. The duchess, in great alarm at such a prospect, resolved to keep her sons under her own eye.

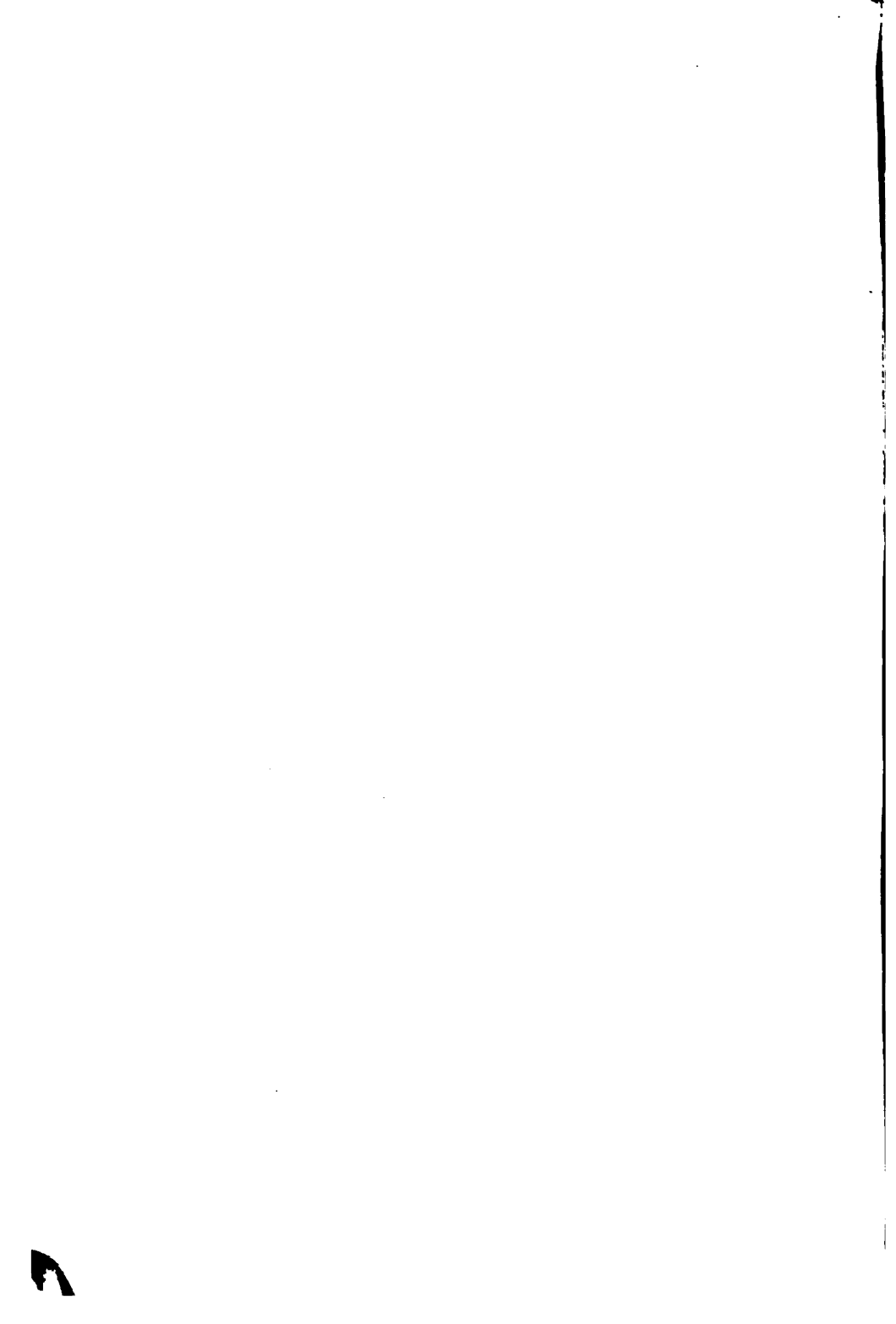
But then, what about the university course? Surely there was a university at Erfurt, and, belonging to that university, a distinguished scholar, who, so lately as 1769, had made a name by a philosophical work entitled *Der Goldene Spiegel*, in which he set forth what the great and the noble should learn in order to make the people happy. Wieland (for that was the name of the author) had expected that the Emperor Joseph II. would have extended his patronage to the book and its author; but in this hope he was disappointed, the emperor noticing neither the one nor the other. Amalia, therefore, seized the opportunity to secure the co-operation of so learned a man in the task of educating her sons.



CHRISTOPH MARTIN WIELAND.

[p. 81.]





Wieland, who in the year 1769 had been summoned to Erfurt to take the chair of Primarius Professor of Philosophy, was at the same time given the rank of Crown Counsellor to the Elector of Mayence, or Mainz. There he had written his *Goldene Spiegel*, in which, under the name of "Danischwende,"¹ he instructs kings, rulers and

¹ Christoph Martin Wieland, was the son of a parson living at Oberholzheim, a village forming part of the free town of Biberach. Although the parson was probably not possessed of more than the proverbial "forty pounds a year," he was able, living being cheap in Biberach, to give his son an excellent education, and to send him to the university of Erfurt, where he took honours. Law, which was to be his profession, did not attract him, and being drawn to the study of poetic literature, he took when he was twenty-one his own line, and as a first step went to Zurich, where Professor Bodmer was the leading light. He remained with Bodmer two years, during which time he wrote several poems. Later he entered the family of some friends of Bodmer as tutor, and afterwards went in the same capacity to Berne, where he met Rousseau and his friend Julie Bondeli, the latter exercising considerable influence over the young poet. This, however, was not his first love affair. It would appear, indeed, from his own confession, that Wieland was somewhat of a Don Juan, so many were his flirtations. They all, however, being carried on with clever women, contributed to a certain extent to the development of his great mental powers. One of his flames was Sophie Gutermann, afterwards De la Roche, whose name was well known as one of the most prominent of the "Sentimentalists." As is generally the case, the woman to whose fascinations Wieland finally yielded was of quite a different order from the *femmes savantes* with whom he had dallied. Anna Dorothea von Hillebrand, the

nobles in the history of mankind. This Golden Looking Glass was a remarkable work. Its sentimental tone would not suit the practical taste of to-day; but sentimentality and romanticism were the fashion in 1769, so the book was much read and talked about.

Anna Amalia was greatly impressed, and anxious to draw the writer into the circle of distinguished men with which she desired to surround her sons. If only she could secure the original of *Danischwende*, it would be a good beginning. Count Görtz was a friend of the Primarius Professor, but Görtz was not inclined to move in the matter; so Amalia, who, it must be confessed, was at heart

daughter of a merchant in Strasburg, was neither an *illuminée* nor a sentimentalist. "She has little or nothing," he writes to a friend, "of the qualities with which I have been saturated and which I am now convinced would be unsatisfactory food for real happiness. I do not care to find such in my wife. As Haller says, I have chosen her to satisfy my desires and to gratify my heart. She is innocent as a child, unspotted, by the world, a sweet, joyous, delightful creature; not beautiful, but quite pretty enough for an honourable man, who wishes to have his wife for himself and not for the admiration of the world at large." The marriage was a happy one, albeit a year after his marriage we find Wieland writing to the same friend that his wife does not know what the word *verse* means, and has never read a line of his writings. Such was the wife of the man who, in his early days, had raved about Sophie Gutermann and Julie Bondeli.

somewhat of a "lion-hunter," commissioned Count Dalberg, who had an appointment at Erfurt, to negotiate the matter.

Dalberg, however, was not successful; so brave Anna Amalia takes it in hand herself, and, true to "*ce que femme veut*," carries it through triumphantly. The duchess goes to a *redoute* at Erfurt and there first approaches the philosopher. She gives him a sunny smile and talks to him of his great book and her admiration for "Danischwende,"¹ her difficulties about her son, and her plans for his education, which she would dearly love to talk over with "Danischwende" (or Wieland). This interview is followed by a lengthy correspondence, which, in its complete form, is to be found in the State archives of Weimar. Each letter from Wieland occupies at least thirteen to fifteen pages. The Primarius Professor, therefore, although he had translated Shakespeare, had evidently not taken to heart the maxim, that "Brevity is the soul of wit."²

"Danischwende" was tutor to the young prince in Wieland's *Goldene Spiegel* which had first attracted Anna Amalia's attention.

² A continuation to the "Golden Looking Glass" appeared in *Deutsche Merkur* of 1775, entitled "Danischwende." The *Merkur* was a review of great importance edited for many years by

It would seem from these letters that Wieland had paid a visit to the court at Weimar ; for otherwise how could he have known that the duchess "was happy in possessing a son of whose understanding the first of living kings (Frederick the Great) had spoken so highly," or that the young Karl August "does not show much sensibility, but that this defect is compatible with the most exalted virtue." He goes on to say that the prince possesses a sound judgment, natural intelligence, and a remarkable abhorrence of flattery ; that he is capable of taking a high place amongst the rulers of the age, and repeats his former statement, only now from personal observation, as to the goodness of his heart.

This flattering estimate of her son from the original of "Danischwende" was most pleasing to the duchess's maternal pride, and her answer contains an astounding proposal: Will "Danischwende" come to Weimar for six months to instruct her dear son in philosophy, and thus give the finishing touch to all his other fine qualities? Then

Wieland, to which nearly every man of mark and talent throughout Germany contributed. Wieland's letters to Merck and others contain repeated allusions to the *Merkur*.

we have another lengthy correspondence, in the course of which the duchess grows very philosophical and propounds several important questions ; first, whether the great ones of the earth can be happy ; second, if a woman must have a strong soul ; also her own conviction that, if she could retrace her steps, she would have given her son a different training ; and, lastly, she wishes his opinion as to the want of frankness in her eldest son's character.¹

¹ In one of these long-winded epistles, dated March 29th, 1772, she writes :

"You have tranquillised my mind as to the moral character of my eldest son. Many of his inclinations, which gave me much uneasiness since your letter, appear now to my mind in a different light. You assure me that he has a good heart. This I have never for a moment doubted. Nevertheless, I thought there was a certain hardness in his character which in my opinion is a great fault in any one, but worst of all in a ruler. I am, however, convinced by your observations that I was in error on this point ; very probably what I considered hardness is merely strength of mind. As we always hope that what we wish may be true, I am satisfied as to the goodness of his heart, and that is the great point for any one who is destined later on to govern ; and as far as his understanding and his genius are in question, I may flatter myself that he is the first of the House who has possessed the one or the other. The mean vices of hypocrisy or lying are, I trust, far removed from my son's character ; nevertheless, he does not possess the frankness which is generally noticeable in boys of his age. He understands only too well how to be reserved. If I do not mistake, these faults arise from a defect in his education or from his own self-love, which does not allow

To all these questions come long-winded replies ; only in the matter of the six months' residence there is a good deal of coquetting on the part of the philosopher. There are various objections ; first, the separation from wife and family. Then he throws out a hint : it is not instruction in philosophy that the prince requires, but to have a philosopher always with him.

"Then," writes Anna Amalia delightedly, "come yourself as philosopher, friend, and instructor, and bring your wife and family."

The answer is characteristic of the man. "I did not think of offering myself, and I esteem myself

him to be as frank and open as a high-hearted gentleman should be. I do not doubt that, when you know him more fully, you will find that I am right ; and I greatly fear that to cure this defect will be very hard, if not impossible—it has already taken such a deep hold. I confess to you in all sincerity that, if I could begin again, I should bring up my children in a totally different manner. The deep knowledge which you have shown as to the proper treatment for these tender plants has much impressed me, and shall be my guide ; the happiness of my children lies so near my heart that I am ready to sacrifice everything which might interfere with the fulfilment of my wishes. You can gauge by this the great obligations which I owe to you. Friendship founded on esteem and gratitude should be the expression of innermost feelings, and such a friendship have I vowed for my life to you and shall always remain

"Your very true friend,

"AMALIA."

and my merits as an instructor sufficiently to be aware that no money could *repay* my services. But there is my friend and patron the Elector of Mainz ; you will have to settle with him ; without his permission I make no permanent arrangement." This lands us in another long correspondence, with which I shall not weary my readers. In the end the negotiations were favourable to the duchess's desires, and the professor and all his belongings arrived in Weimar September 1772.

At first everything went smoothly, the education of both princes took a new start, and Wieland in his letters to his friends at Erfurt and elsewhere, speaks in high terms of the talents and disposition of Karl August. There were several assistant-masters. Counsellor Schmid, Major Duvernois, instructor in French, and others. Every month a written report of the progress and general conduct of the princes was sent to the duchess.

One would have supposed that under these circumstances, and in view of the simple and family life at the Court (the two princes spent several hours of each day with their mother), everything would have gone smoothly and without any shoals or quicksands. Unfortunately, the expectations

the duchess had formed on the arrival of Wieland were doomed to disappointment. The choice of the incomparable "Danischwende" as a preceptor for the princes was not viewed with approbation by the people of Weimar; and this feeling was strengthened by the uproar that arose in 1774 against the unchristian and immoral tendency of his writings. The crusade against him was led by one of his oldest friends and admirers, Lavater, who called for prayers to be said in all churches for the unhappy sinner. His writings and teaching were openly denounced from various pulpits with exceptional severity.

During this crusade, which commenced in 1774, Anna Amalia stood firmly by her sons' preceptor, and it is doubtful if, without her support, Wieland could have made head against the storm. It therefore comes as a surprise, and is suggestive of the uncertainty of human friendship, to find that the last two years of the duchess's regency were embittered by the relations between her and Karl August, these relations being in her opinion mainly due to Wieland's influence, joined to that of Count Görtz.

In all such cases of domestic friction it is difficult

for outsiders to judge correctly as to where, or with whom lies the fault. It should, however, be remembered that in this instance the duchess had acted in regard to her duty as guardian to her son, in a singularly upright and unselfish spirit. She had devoted all the faculties of her mind, all the energy of her nature, she had sacrificed the joys common to her age and the pleasures of her youth, to the duties of a mother and the harassing cares of government. It was but natural that she should be indignant, when she found that so much self-denial and devotion met with what she considered an inadequate return of affection and gratitude. She forgot that youth is seldom grateful, and is apt to look upon the sacrifices made in its interest as only the natural and proper duty of a parent.

It was truly a sad experience, and one that makes the reader indignant, to find that after all her anxiety and toil the two last years of her regency should have been embittered by these unpleasant experiences, which, although perhaps aggravated by her naturally hasty temper, at last drove her to take a resolution which, fortunately, she did not in the end put into execution.

When we recall the pressing invitations given by

Amalia to Wieland in March 1772, which induced him to come to Weimar in September of the same year, it is a surprise to read the following letter written but little more than a year after his arrival. The letter is addressed to Minister von Fritsch :

“ I have long wished to communicate with you on the subject of my children, and I think it is better to do so in writing than by word of mouth. For the last year my son has altered strangely in his conduct towards me. I have tried to open his eyes as to Görtz and Wieland, but I have met with the most stubborn opposition. Karl's self-love is his great enemy, vanity and ambition his predominant defects ; his judgment is good and he has a noble heart. May God preserve him from a great or absorbing passion of any sort. One consolation is that love for a woman will not be *his* danger ; that is not in his temperament, which is most constant ; nothing will turn him when once he has chosen his friend. And there is the misfortune. You know Count Görtz as well as I do—a restless, intriguing, ambitious man. To attain his own ends he stops at nothing ; he is not judicious in his system, which is temporising and cajoling, but has neither method nor firmness.

When he is alone with Karl he speaks to him in a most commanding and imperious manner. You can ask old Hermann, and he will let you into a good deal. As for Wieland, he has a feeling, sensitive heart and means well ; but he is nothing but a weak enthusiast, full of vanity and self-love. I realise, unfortunately when it is too late, that he is utterly unfit for the situation in which I have placed him ; he does not understand youth or how to fit a young prince for his future position, and both Wieland and Görtz (the first I acquit of any bad motive) unite in a system of flattery. They flatter one another and they flatter my son, who, in addition to his other faults, has the weakness to see no fault in those he loves or likes ; therefore it is more than useless to think of opening his eyes when he imagines these two men *to be perfect*.

“ You see, therefore, how difficult is the position. To make a scene and to go the length of dismissing Wieland and Görtz would only make matters worse and give food to the gossips, and would probably increase the influence of a certain family whom you know as well as I do. In short, I am tired of the life I am compelled to lead. I

am not politic enough to conceal my distaste and displeasure from the persons who have merited it by their conduct. At the same time I am quite aware that I gain nothing by this mode of procedure, and therefore I am determined to apply to the court of Vienna for sanction to resign the regency as soon as Karl is seventeen. I don't think a year more or less will make any great difference. I am the more inclined to take this step on account of the deplorable condition of the Privy Purse. It is quite useless to make representations to Herr von Witzleben, either gently or with firmness, it is always the same answer ; and I confess it does annoy me that, whereas the treasury can always supply the demands made by my son for his pleasures, towards me there is ever the cry of "Poverty" and "No funds!"

"I confess I am too proud to put up with such treatment without showing my displeasure ; and, above all, I see clearly that I possess no longer either the firmness to control, or the patience to endure, such abuses. Every one now looks to the rising sun. But do not imagine I am therefore jealous. I am content to have given the people an amount of happiness which



they never enjoyed before my regency. That is my best reward, and I shall always treasure it in my heart. I hope you will approve of my determination and rejoice with me on my deliverance from a great burden, for I repeat I desire ardently to be set free."

At first we read this letter with astonishment that the duchess, who was now thirty-four, and had held the reins of government for more than fifteen years, should have been surprised into such a childish exhibition of temper as this; but, reading through the lines, one can easily find the clue. It was the mother's heart, not the wisdom of a wise politician, that prompted this outbreak. Amalia felt herself struck in the tenderest point. She best knew all the sacrifices she had made; how she had given up the pleasures of youth to the hard study of learning how to govern, and how she had toiled and striven to keep the little duchy for the son, who now turned to other counsellors. It was no wonder she felt sore at heart; not that she blamed Karl so much; she threw the blame on Count Görtz and Wieland.

Both men had been her own choice, and as Görtz had now been in his office something over

ten years, it seems strange that it was only now his evil qualities came to the front in so conspicuous a manner. Wieland had been but one year in the office, which the duchess herself had forced upon him. We have also to consider that here again it was the duchess who was the prime mover in inducing him to undertake the position he now held about her son ; also that, once this cloud had passed away, he remained on terms of the greatest friendship with the duchess for the rest of his life. Taking these two points together, it is evident that the whole matter was nothing but a fit of jealousy on the part of Anna Amalia.

Fortunately she had in Minister von Fritsch a wise counsellor and devoted friend. The calm, judicial manner in which he replied to her proposal to resign the office she held as regent must have acted as a sort of "douche" to her feminine and maternal excitement.

"Your Highness cannot resign your office until the prince attains his eighteenth year. He has still to complete his studies ; and later he must be introduced to the chamber, where he will learn his duties. In this way he will see for himself how much truth there is in what his flatterers tell him,

and he will learn to appreciate what his mother has done for him. From what you say of the Privy Purse and Finance Chamber, it is plain that some stricter organisation is necessary. Some arrangement must also be made for Prince Constantine, whose military education must be taken in hand."

He winds up his exhortations by reminding the duchess that it was the last wish of her late husband, the duke, that his son should not begin to govern the duchy till his majority ; and that, therefore, the young prince would have every reason to complain if this express wish of his father were controverted. "And as to the idea of your highness's that one year more or less makes no difference, I must with all respect contradict this sentiment. It is true that a year sometimes passes quickly, but its flight does not prevent much progress in good being made by those who employ the time well ; and this without compliment would be the case with your highness. At the same time we all know how much evil can be wrought in the space of a year by inexperienced rulers, with bad counsellors perhaps. I do not say Karl August would be a bad ruler ; he certainly would be inexperienced,



and his choice of counsellors might be doubtful. Now, for these evils, with their irreparable consequences, you, and you *alone* would be responsible by your sudden action in upsetting the present existing arrangements."

Fritsch then goes on to point out to the duchess how many things still remain to be done before the young heir is fit for his position. "I have always thought it a rash act to send a young, undisciplined youth straight from the schoolroom to the throne. It is at all events a dangerous experiment. I think Your Highness will do well to consider this, and to return to your former idea, that the prince, like other princes, should travel and see a little, at all events, of the world before undertaking the government of the duchy."

This admirable letter, the frankness of which is rare to find amongst the advisers of royalty, ends by drawing the duchess's attention to Prince Constantine, "who has frankly told me that he feels himself neglected." The communication ends with a prophecy that the intimate friendship which at the present time existed between Görtz and Wieland would, as a natural con-

sequence (violent friendships having generally violent endings) terminate in enmity.

Anna Amalia, fortunately, was able to appreciate the frankness which characterised von Fritsch's advice; and not only did she appreciate but she followed the counsel given. There was no more talk of resignation, and all the reforms he had mentioned, beginning with the military education of Prince Constantine, were put into execution.

Curiously enough, his prophecy concerning the friendship between Wieland and Görtz being of short duration was realised. Writing to Zimmermann, January 1773, Wieland, who had then been only a short time in Weimar, says :

"I love my prince and my prince loves me. His mentor, Count von Görtz, is my friend. Don't shake your head at this rash assertion of mine. He is my friend, and I will give you the reason why we are and must be friends to one another : it is because we are as lonely here as if we were on the top of a mountain, or in the desert of Sahara. With the exception of the prince, Görtz has not a single friend but me. I have no friend but him. Do you need any further proof?"

Three years later the story is quite different. In a letter to Merck, dated July 5th, 1776, we find the following :—

“Here is news for the gossips. Count Görtz is getting ready to go to your neighbourhood, and from thence to Mainz and Mannheim, to raise a whirlwind against Goethe and me. The wretch ! Not another word about such a reptile !”

But in 1773 the friendship was at its height and the coalition was giving the duchess infinite annoyance. Many other causes were added to disquiet her, and to crown all these every-day recurring annoyances, came a calamity.

On May 5th, 1774, a storm broke over Weimar ; it raged with unexampled fury all that day and the next. On the night of the 5th lightning struck the residence, or castle ;¹ a fire burst out which no efforts could subdue, the wind fanning

¹ The ancient Castle of Weimar, which up to the seventeenth century was called Hornstein, was partially destroyed by a fire which broke out in 1424, and which consumed the greater portion of the town. Both the town and castle were rebuilt by Landgraf Frederick IV., called the “Peacemaker.” The Bastille and the principal tower, which still remain bear the date 1439 and an inscription. In the floods which rose in 1613 to a great height in parts of Thuringia, the lower rooms of the castle were very much injured. In 1619 a fire destroyed a great portion of the



THE SCHLOSS.

The Residence of the Grand Duke of Weimar-Eisenach.

the flames till the building lay in ruins. As soon as the consternation caused by this event was over, the first and most necessary step was to choose a suitable residence for the duchess and her family ; and here there arose a renewal of the differences which had been silenced during the excitement of the misfortune ; the mother and son were diametrically opposed in their views of a suitable residence. This time the difference of opinion was accentuated by the determination shown by the prince to have his own way. On the other hand, the duchess considered (as mothers, even in our own advanced days, sometimes consider) that she was the one who held the decision in her hands. She had set her mind upon three houses in the town which, with little trouble and small outlay, could be made to suit the purpose. Karl wished to buy the Landschaft, or Assembly House, an official residence, handsome externally

castle, including the church and lower tower. In 1619 Duke John Ernest commenced the new building, but its completion was delayed by the Thirty Years' War. Duke William IV. completed it. On April 11th, 1654, a banquet was given for the first time in the new hall. On March 28th, the birthday of the duke, the church was consecrated. In 1696 an Opera House was added to the castle by Duke William Ernest. In 1774 the castle was destroyed by fire.

but badly built, as the prince was later to find to his cost. His obstinacy in this matter seems to have strangely irritated the duchess, who writes an agitated letter to Minister von Fritsch.

“I have gone through all the suitable houses accompanied by my sons and Herr von Witzleben. As I told you yesterday, Karl has got it into his head that he must have the Landschaft House, because it is a more royal looking residence, and therefore flatters his ridiculous vanity. I told him, in presence of President von Kalb and Herr Berendis, that he can do as he chooses ; and he has determined to make this house the Fürstenhaus. I have therefore told the architect to prepare plans for knocking the three houses I showed you into one for my own residence, and also to see what alterations are needed to make the Assembly House suitable for Karl. Berendis has my orders to submit these plans to you, and also to repeat to you verbatim what passed between Karl and myself. You will oblige me by speaking openly of the matter at the council meeting, so that the council may talk it over with my son and explain to him how unfit the Assembly House is for the purpose he requires, and what an

endless source of expense and discomfort this fancy of his (which has been put into his head by some one) will prove. When I saw he was so bent on having his own way (or, rather, on following *the advice* he had received) I told Karl to buy the house he fancied—that is, if he had the money. Enough about it. I shall concern myself no further with this utterly wretched, miserable business.”

To this agitated epistle an answer comes speedily, signed by the three members of the council, Fritsch, Schmid, and Schnauss. It is couched in the most respectful terms, but entreats the duchess regent to calm herself and try to recover her influence with her son, and to persuade him to give up the idea of buying the Assembly House, “which is eminently unsuited for a dwelling, being merely built for official purposes in a somewhat hasty and inefficient manner.” The council entreated the duchess to induce her son to wait until the architect’s plans for a royal residence were ready for his inspection. In conclusion they asked her to remember that so long as she filled the position of regent nothing should, or could, be done without her authority.

But after all the correspondence, and the talking and the general fuss, the outcome was what might have been expected ; regent and ministry had to give way to "Karl's indomitable will," and the Assembly House became the prince's residence.

It was a poor satisfaction to those who had been against the purchase that, in a few years, Karl August had to acknowledge the truth of their warnings. Writing to Merck in 1781 he tells a lamentable tale of all the repairs he had to make ; "the house is only twelve years built, and already the ceiling in the great hall has fallen down and the foundations are sinking. It is altogether a mere shell."

Anna Amalia had a different story to tell as to her habitation. Some years previously Herr von Fritsch had begun to build for himself and his newly married wife a house at the corner of the esplanade. At this time the Schillerstrasse was not built, and Fritsch's house stood in a charming garden, which was surrounded by a quickset hedge, and through which ran a clear and refreshing rivulet. This delightful residence Fritsch offered to his royal mistress, and until her death Anna Amalia made the

Witthumshaus (Dower House) as it was called, her winter residence.¹

The friction between mother and son (which had begun even before the choice of a house had aggravated matters) unfortunately continued all through 1774, the flame being fanned by the mischievous advisers of the young prince. We find Fritsch writing to his father, an experienced courtier and diplomat, to ask his advice as to his own conduct in the strained relations existing between the duchess and her son. The old diplomatist answers in a long-winded epistle, clothing his excellent advice in flowery language. The pith of his discourse was contained in his affected admiration for those wise courtiers who unite the worship of the *rising sun* with due respect for the *setting sun*, both being the one constellation, only now shining in different orbits. "I have little doubt that you, my son, being of a stronger character, would probably look upon such a temporising course as mere cowardice. Do not for this reason utterly reject the course

¹ It is left uncertain whether Fritsch made the duchess a gift of the house or whether it was a business transaction. That it still remains in the possession of the ducal family would suggest that it was the latter.

I advise, but consider calmly if you cannot serve the two constellations for the sake of the general good. Where there are two altars, why should they not contribute to the same end?" This wily Talleyrand concludes with these words: "I believe that if the setting sun could be brought to stifle all feelings of jealousy, and the rising sun could be induced to show the affection which no doubt exists, this course would be the most judicious that a wise and prudent astrologer could adopt."

Following this good advice, which accorded so thoroughly with his own ideas, Fritsch took "the bold course" and urged upon the duchess the necessity of initiating Karl August into affairs of state, the first step to this being his introduction to the council.

This was not very quickly accomplished, the chief obstacle not being so much jealousy on the part of the duchess (as the elder Fritsch supposed), as the fact that the whole system of education for the two princes had to be suddenly broken up and put on a new footing.

Fritsch's remarks as to the neglect shown in regard to Prince Constantine had borne fruit, and

the duchess turned her attention first of all to giving her younger son, who had been too long neglected, a military tutor. This was Herr von Knebel, who had been eight years in the Prussian service and was at the same time a cultivated man, enjoying the friendship of several of the *literati* of the day. Knebel was a dilettante poet and author of some praiseworthy, if not very brilliant, literary efforts. At the same time Prince Karl's establishment was increased by the appointment of the master of the horse, Herr von Stein, to be his gentleman-in-waiting.

Fritsch writes to his father of these changes and of the introduction of the prince into the council, and the diplomatist answers, October 1774 : " Your news gives me infinite satisfaction. The prince's presence in the cabinet will have a wonderful effect and his royal mother will find her influence materially strengthened by this wise step. He will now forget the vexation that he has felt at being treated always as only the *Crown Prince*, which is not the custom at other courts, where the superior title is invariably *given to a prince under age*."

Here we have the key to the misunderstanding

between the duchess and her son. There were those about the young heir who were ready enough to point out that he was not only unfairly kept in subjection by his mother, but was deprived of his right to enjoy a rank superior to his brother and equal to what she possessed. The duchess, rightly or wrongly, considered that it was Görtz and Wieland who had put into her son's mind this idea, which so worked upon him as to make him withdraw his confidence from her and to give it altogether to her enemies. Minister Fritsch shared this opinion of men, whom he considered satellites of the rising sun. But although this judgment no doubt was just in so far as Count Görtz was concerned, it does not seem to have been fair as regarded Wieland, whose letters to his numerous friends point altogether in the opposite direction. Wieland, moreover, was a man of warm affections, and inclined, as such generally are, to endow the object of his regard with every virtue under the sun.

CHAPTER IV

FOLLOWING the advice of Minister von Fritsch, Anna Amalia had, as we know, appointed a military tutor to prepare Prince Constantine for his future career. Whether Karl Ludwig von Knebel was exactly the right man in the right place is to be doubted. He was nevertheless a gentleman of undoubted honour, while his amiability of character and his accomplishments (he was a poet of a minor order and an agreeable musician) recommended him to the favour of the dilettante duchess.

The assiduous court paid by this young officer to Minister von Fritsch could not but be gratifying to the older man. Knebel, who was twenty-nine, had, during his stay at Berlin and elsewhere, been thrown in company of men of distinction in art and letters. Moses Mendelssohn was his friend, he enjoyed an intimate correspondence with Nicolai, who kept him supplied with all the newest publi-

cations, while with both Gleim and Bode he was on friendly terms. Fritsch speedily felt convinced that here was the needful trainer he had been in search of, and became eager to secure him. Nevertheless it seems that Knebel left Weimar without anything definite being concluded. It was after he had been in Nuremberg some little time that he received, through Kapellmeister Wolf, a proposal from Minister Fritsch, originating from the duchess regent, that he should undertake the duties of military tutor to her son, Prince Constantine, as well as the post of Master of the Ceremonies to the little Court—a curious enough jumble of appointments; but we must remember the civil list was not a large one.

Knebel seems to have been somewhat overpowered by the idea of becoming the guide, philosopher and tutor of a real prince.

“What! I am to be the instructor of a prince!” he writes in an ecstasy of self-humiliation. And then he goes on to ask that he may come on a year’s probation. “During this period I will ask your gracious highness,” he writes, “to be patient with my shortcomings, which are due to a natural timidity of temperament,

from which springs a disinclination for all society and especially for a court life. Therefore I would ask you, gracious lady, to take me under your protection and benevolently to support me in my office, and in return I will make use of every effort in my power to merit the great favour which you have conferred upon me."

Shortly after this letter was written the disastrous burning of the castle put a stop to all plans of education ; but when things began to settle down again the negotiations were renewed. Everything was settled. But now began the usual intrigues against the new appointment. Unfortunately, Minister von Fritsch left Weimar to take his usual course of baths at Goddula ; before his departure the official agreement with Knebel, was ready for his signature. The terms, however, were not in accordance with the verbal agreement ; and Knebel, accordingly, refused to sign it, and wrote to his friend and patron to give his reasons, in an epistle of extraordinary length. After sending this letter Knebel returned to Anspach, where his father held an appointment as minister, where also he had a friend in the Margraf, and remained quietly awaiting further developments.

Meantime all manner of reports were flying about. The duchess was plagued with anonymous letters warning her against the new military instructor. When Fritsch returned he found an organised opposition had been set on foot against Knebel. It seemed as if this opposition proceeded from a very high quarter; and soon there was evidence that Count Görtz was adverse to the new appointment. Fritsch, however, calmed the fears of his protégé by giving him satisfactory assurances of his continued support. In the letter which confirms his appointment as tutor to Prince Constantine, the minister says :

“I have been here (at Weimar) for the last fortnight, and I can bear testimony (most unwillingly) to the manner in which certain people, if they cannot compass their designs by any other means, take refuge in calumnies, untruths, and exaggerations of what may contain a mole-hill of truth, which is expanded into a mountain by the mendacity of evil-minded persons, whose testimony presents such a hopeless tangle of falsehood that I find it an impossible task to get any of their statements to hang together, being as they are for the most part utterly improbable or

exaggerated. I can, therefore, only repeat to those concerned in the matter that *I go bail* for my friend. I feel sure that when once his merits have been recognised, the prejudice which has been raised against him by evil reports will change into a warm recognition of his merits, and general acclamation will silence the voice of calumny. And to this end, my worthy and dear friend, you must turn your whole attention. You must be careful and not leave a loophole in your armour of defence. You must remember you have enemies only too anxious to undo you, and you must watch your words and actions—yes, even your very thoughts, lest any ground should be given of which your enemies could take advantage. Only be circumspect and prudent, and I see no reason why you should not in time silence the tongue of the scandal-monger, and, it may be, have full justice done to you by those who are now your enemies.”

This letter, which is of great length, seems to have exercised a salutary effect in rousing Knebel from the dejection in which he had been sunk by the machinations of his enemies. He quotes a saying of Cæsar’s as applicable to his situation.

"We may die," said the Roman emperor, as he put to the sea in a great storm, "but we must set sail."

Acting on this courageous sentiment, Knebel set out for Weimar, where he arrived in the first week of October 1874. Here he found the whole social atmosphere changed in regard to him. Not only did he find himself surrounded by enemies, but his duties were curtailed; so, too, was his salary, whilst his position and his entire official status was lowered.

Under these circumstances Knebel did not hesitate a moment in sending in his resignation (which it seems he had the power to do). It must be owned he was somewhat of a thorn in Fritsch's side, but the minister was a large-hearted man and could make allowances for the easily wounded susceptibilities of a weak nature such as Knebel's. He flatly refused to accept the young man's ill-considered resignation. Anna Amalia, influenced by Fritsch, and attracted by the artistic personality of Knebel, was anxious to retain him in her son's service, and gave orders that a new agreement should be executed allowing the conditions and giving the terms demanded by the officer. On

October 12th, the duchess writes to Fritsch as follows :—

“ The civil war is at an end. Yesterday evening Görtz came to tell me that Knebel has accepted the proposal which I made to him. Görtz repeated the demands made by Knebel. I asked him what Karl had answered in regard to himself. It appears my son said that he was not in a position to promise anything for the future, but that he assured Knebel he had no objection to him, or against my choosing him. I then sent to Knebel and told him that all was settled, and for the future he might take up his residence in the castle, where he is now located. This afternoon I had Görtz, my children, and Knebel with me. I introduced Constantine to his new tutor, and I begged Görtz to assist his new colleague in every way, and asked both men to be good friends. Görtz promised me that it should be so, and added that he had already begun and would go on doing all in his power to carry out my wishes. Previous to these peace ratifications I took Karl into my own room and asked him to select from the gentlemen-in-waiting those whom he would like best to have about him, and I added I would like him to have a little court of his own.



This idea enchanted him. He at once chose Seckendorf. I answered that he had not understood my proposal. I had particularly said I did not wish him to choose from the pages, which would not be suitable, but from the gentlemen-in-waiting.

“He reflected for a few minutes, and then said ‘Give me Stein or Klinkowström.’ I answered I did not wish to limit or interfere with his choice, but that I thought as Stein was master of the horse, and as he (Karl) esteemed him and had known him a long time, and had confidence in him, and Görtz seemed friendly with him, and that also, as long as *I* had known Stein, he had impressed me as being a worthy man; therefore on all these grounds I thought he would be a good choice; but, I added, if he preferred Klinkowström I had nothing against him; it was altogether for him to decide.

“‘No, no, dear mamma, let me have Stein;¹ since I was a child I have always liked him, and I shall be pleased to have him always with me; and please let me tell him that I *chose him myself*.’

“I agreed that it should be as he wished. Later

¹ Stein received a salary of 200 thalers.



KARL LUDWIG VON KNEBEL.

[p. 115.]

I told Görtz, who seemed very well pleased with the arrangement."

She then goes on to ask directions as to informing the council of the new appointments and other minor details of business.

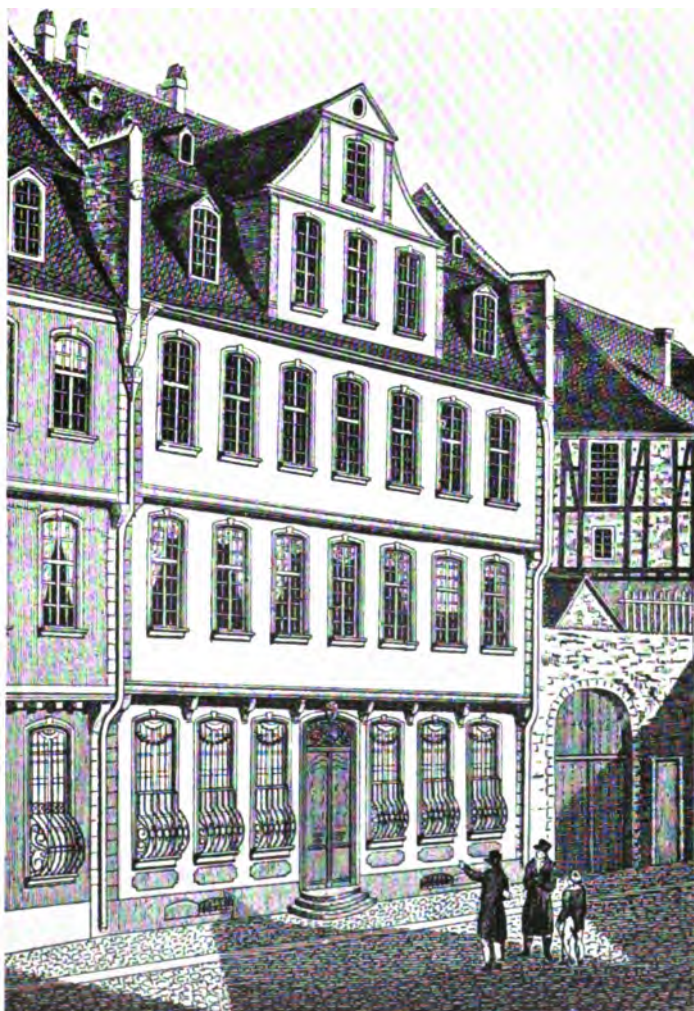
Knebel took the oath, or, as we would say, kissed hands on entering on his duties, and almost immediately the duchess began the preparations for her sons' tour, a matter she had greatly at heart. Both princes were to travel for some months under Knebel's supervision—an astonishing proof of confidence in an almost total stranger, which should have soothed the sensitive character of the new governor. In the eighteenth century it was a matter of necessity that every royal princeling, as well as every nobleman and gentleman of condition, should make what was called "the grand tour," which sometimes occupied a couple of years. Anna Amalia did not contemplate anything so ambitious for her sons, but her clear sense and sound judgment told her that it would be well if they were removed, even for a short time, from the small circle where they (especially Karl) were the cynosure of all eyes. It would take down the young heir's opinion of

his own importance, thought the wise duchess, to see how small a space he and his duchy occupied amongst other nations. So the two princes set out with Knebel, "who is, as usual, depressed and nervous at the greatness of the responsibility," Frankfurt was their first stopping-place.

Frankfurt is about eight hours' journey from Weimar by rail. Consequently, we can calculate that it took the prince at least two days to reach this beautiful city. And here occurred an event which was destined to have, in the near future, the most surprising issues. And in this connection we must always remember that it was to Knebel, and his introduction of Karl August to Goethe, that we owe the great literary event which raised Weimar from its insignificance, and gave to it the proud title of the Modern Athens.

In Goethe's autobiography we come on the following passage :—

"I was one day writing in my apartment, which being partly shut up and hung with sketches has the appearance of an artist's study, when a gentleman entered who introduced himself as von Knebel, tutor to Prince Constantine of Weimar."



THE HOUSE WHERE GOETHE WAS BORN, FRANKFURT.

[p. 116.]



This visit, accidental though it at first appeared, was a turning-point in the poet's life, as well as in that of Karl August. Knebel told Goethe how desirous was the elder of the princes (who had just read *Götz von Berlichingen*) to make his acquaintance. In accordance with this wish, the poet visited the princes and was received with flattering kindness, especially by Karl August. He dined with his royal hosts in a quiet way and left them, having received and produced an agreeable impression. They were going to Mainz, whither he promised to follow them. His father, a typical sturdy old burgher who held aloof from princes, shook his sceptical head at the idea of this visit to Mainz. The poet nevertheless went a day or two afterwards and spent several days there as the guest of the royal princes. This was his first contact with men of such high rank. Goethe was at this period twenty-five years of age; in the full splendour of his wonderful beauty, and in the full possession of his extraordinary gifts, he had already produced two masterpieces—*Götz* and *Werther*. The first was the product of a somewhat unhealthy sentimentalism, *Werther* the outcome of a love episode.

And yet, although both these early works represent the tendencies of the time, they are both far removed from the ridiculous sentimentalism and extravagant romance of the day, which were all imbued with the most "hysterical enthusiasm."¹

In the grand-ducal archives in Weimar there is a certain blue portfolio which bears the in-

¹ Jean Paul, in his gently satirical fashion, remarks that there was a universal love for all men and beasts except reviewers, and it is amusing to note how the world repeats its follies, from one generation to another, for in 1774 we find there was a society, or order, of trembling "souls" who drew together in brotherly and sisterly love, helping one another not in any sensible or serviceable manner, but merely holding "spiritual communion" together; and the first commandment, of this brotherhood and sisterhood of souls was to love your neighbour and your neighbour's wife! "The cause of these diseased imaginations," says an English writer, "was want of faith in religion, in morality, in philosophy, as well as in politics; and in morals the eighteenth century was ostentatious in its disquiet and disbelief. The old Faith which so long had made European life an organic unity was no longer universal, active, living, dominant; its place of universal directing power was vacant. A new faith had not arisen, and as men's minds should feed upon some form of devotion, we find these makeshifts of universal love, these unholy pacts between men and women, this foolish and sickly romanticism spreading like the upas-tree over the fair pastures of intellectuality." Goethe, although by no means a sickly sentimentalist, was suffering from imaginary passions, first for Lotte, who was engaged to his friend Kestner, and then for Lili, who was one of the "souls," but who nevertheless preferred a rich husband to the adorable youth of Goethe.



scription : "Letters from my sons Karl August and Constantine, from 1774-1775."

These carefully preserved treasures of a mother's heart have a sacred and tender interest. They are a trifle yellow now, and the writers have long since crumbled into dust in the royal mausoleum ; but we can with a little imagination picture to ourselves how these, the first letters written by her boys, were received by the loving mother ; how she showered kisses on the paper, and showed with pride to Wieland and Minister von Fritsch the firm, decided handwriting of her eldest son.

The difference of character which distinguished the two princes is very clearly marked in these boyish letters. Karl August pours out all the fresh enthusiasm of a youthful mind, delighted with the novelty of the situation in which he finds himself. He is brimming over with high spirits and the enjoyment of the first taste of liberty, and, although his letters show symptoms of the masterful spirit within always ready to assert itself, there is, nevertheless, a generous, frank outpouring of boyish confidence, mingled with affectionate dependence on his mother.

Prince Constantine does not impress the readers

of his correspondence so favourably. To be sure it is hard to judge from the hasty, ill-written specimens to hand. He writes seldom and his letters are in a depressed, subdued tone. They are carelessly written and blotted; words are frequently omitted (an expert would say a proof of a disorderly nature). Almost every letter ends with excuses, the refuge of a shallow mind. "Forgive, *chère maman*, this short letter; next time I shall write more, but the weather is so terribly cold that I cannot hold my pen."

Both princes unite in hearty praise of Frau Goethe, the poet's mother. Karl August hopes they do not flatter themselves, when they believe that the kind lady, who seems so very good to live with (and whose eyes resemble those of her son), has some liking for them, as well as they for her. This is prettily put, and at once secured Anna Amalia's interest in the good Frau Aja.¹

That the difficulties of Knebel's position did not cease with his departure from Weimar, and that they were in a certain sense due to the sensitive nature of the newly appointed tutor, is evident

¹ The name by which Goethe's mother was generally known among her intimate friends.

from a complaint that he writes from Strasburg to his friend and patron, "the highly born and highly gifted Freiherr, Minister von Fritsch." As usual, this lengthy epistle, like numbers written by the same verbose correspondent, runs into four or five pages. We will not, however, trouble ourselves with the wordy compliments and excuses in which Knebel indulges, but go straight to the object of his communication.

"My princes are well primed against me; they have no confidence in me, although I give ample proof that I can be trusted. I tell myself that, as I give no cause for this want of confidence, I should be above caring about it. Nevertheless, heaven only knows how circumstances have occurred, which have thrown certain suspicions on me, and this although I have acted on each occasion in the most upright and sincere manner; and therefore I have now determined for the future to be absolutely silent, and to take no notice of anything. In regard to the Crown Prince I have no complaint to make; he has an honest heart and a fine character, and I am convinced he loves me; and on my part I return his love with my whole heart. His affection

makes me endure other drawbacks. After all, people cannot go on hating me for ever. Nevertheless, such undeserved treatment makes me cold, inactive, and, alas! sometimes discontented with myself.

“Prince Constantine, up to these last few days, has given me much dissatisfaction. I have written to Count Görtz and told him frankly that, unless the prince, who is specially in my charge, will give me his full confidence, it will be impossible for me to be of any use to him, and that I could not think of wasting my time in a fruitless undertaking.

“Count Görtz has written to the prince, and given him a long lecture, with the result that he has, during the last few days, drawn closer to me. I hope this is the beginning of better things. I should be grateful if your excellency would find an opportunity to ask her highness the duchess to convey to Count Görtz her approbation of his conduct; but please allow *him* to *think* that *I* wrote to the gracious duchess on the subject.”

There is a postscript to this lengthy epistle which is a proof, if proof were wanting, of the timidity of Knebel's nature, and his consequent unfitness for a post that required a strong character.

"I rely on the prudence of your excellency not to communicate the contents of this letter to any one, or to allow *any use* to be made of it. I am afraid of Weimar, and I have had good reason to fear its evil tongues. The Crown Prince returns next Wednesday."

The last words of this letter, dated January 28th, 1775, touch the outer circle of a subject of great interest to the people of Weimar, and to Anna Amalia especially. The tour of the princes had a double object, so far as Karl August was concerned. He was not only to improve his mind and gather experience of how other princes ruled, but he was to seek a bride. It was undoubtedly early days to talk of marriage to the barely eighteen-year-old prince¹ (he attained his majority in January 1775, when, according to his father's will, he was to undertake the duties of government), but in the eighteenth century age was reckoned from a different standpoint. It is within the memory of octogenarians of to-day that women at one time were considered *passée* at twenty-five,

¹ He was eighteen on September 5, 1774, but he did not attain his majority till the following January, when the Court of Vienna gave the necessary release, or *venia aetatis*.

and decided old maids at thirty. We have altered this somewhat drastic method of shortening the spring-time of life, and we have likewise raised the position of women by so doing.

At the present time, few, if any, courts in Europe present the terrible spectacle of vice flaunting itself openly, the wife and the mistress having equal rights, and shameless impropriety passing unchallenged by public reproof. The duchess, no doubt, thought that the best way to "steady" (such was the phrase of the day) her son, and give him a taste for family life, was to marry him early. Such a course would likewise ensure the succession, for Prince Constantine was weak, mentally as well as bodily, and it was all-important that there should be an heir as speedily as possible.

Anna Amalia's choice, as we already know, had been made when Karl August was still in the nursery, and his destined bride a baby in her cradle.¹ Since then the powerful Landgräfin of Hesse Darmstadt had died, but this did not interfere with the matter of Karl August's marriage. The princess had been a playfellow

¹ See page 83.

of the young prince in childhood, but there had been no meetings of late years. Karl was, therefore, to pay a visit of inspection to Karlsruhe, where the young princess was residing with her sister, the Margravine of Baden. He was to be accompanied by Count Görtz, while Knebel remained at Strasburg with his pupil Prince Constantine. Count Görtz, whose tenure of office as regarded Karl August was about to expire, was charged with all manner of messages from Anna Amalia, who besought the count to give her speedy and constant news of how the young suitor was progressing.

"Write to me as often as you possibly can," was the anxious mother's request. "Everything that concerns my children interests me." No signs here of a wish to retain in her hands the reins of government, or to keep her son unmarried that she might rule him more easily. Truly to such meanness Anna Amalia's nature could not descend. As she often said, "I am interested in all and everything that concerns my children."

The first letter from Karlsruhe was written by Karl on the day after his arrival. He gives a detailed account of every incident of his

journey to Karlsruhe, but on the subject of his meeting with the princess he has little to say, and what he does say is coldly worded.

“Yesterday evening I renewed my acquaintance with the Princess Louise. She has grown much and has become very handsome. During the few minutes in which I had the privilege of seeing her, she struck me as having a good deal of *esprit*, and as possessing a strong character. I shall take every opportunity to see more of her.”

Nevertheless weeks went by without much apparent progress being made; there was a royal suitor in the way, but at last he got his *cong  *, and Karl writes to his mother in an overflow of spirits.

“The king has said good-bye, and now all will go well. These words are dictated by my heart, dear and excellent mother mine. I implore of you to take care of your precious health for the sake of your son, who loves nothing on earth so much as he does you.”

I wonder was Anna Amalia deceived by this outburst of tenderness? Let us hope she was; but one would imagine she read through the

lines just as we do, and guessed that it was prompted by the happiness the departure of the king, his rival, had given him, which made him love all the world, and most of all his dear, good confidante and mother, the best of women, except, of course, his beautiful bride to be.

On December 19th came at last the long-desired news from Karlsruhe to tell the duchess the wish of her heart was fulfilled.

“MADAM AND VERY DEAR MOTHER,

“Penetrated as I am with feelings of love and gratitude for all your goodness, and certain of having your fullest sympathy in this step as well as in any future action of mine, I lose no time in acquainting the most excellent of mothers that I am betrothed to the Princess Louise of Darmstadt. Since you have already approved my choice, I feel sure I shall shortly receive your consent in due form. You may rest assured that nothing can equal my happiness and gratitude. The Princess Louise commissions me to lay her respects at your feet, and to assure you, dearest mother, that she considers herself very fortunate to be allowed to call herself your daughter. I



and all the world speak well of your character, which, without doubt, is one of the most estimable to be found, and she is absolutely worthy to belong to you. Her only idea is to make other people happy, and she takes a great interest in *my* happiness. Be quite satisfied, best of mothers, on my account. I have chosen the one woman in the world who is suitable to me.”¹

Having indulged in these love rhapsodies, the young duke turns to more practical details. He wishes to give his bride a betrothal ring, and is certain that his mother would like the gift to be worthy alike of the donor and the recipient.

“I have been told that the Markgraf of Baden gave his wife a ring which is worth seven thousand gulden, and the one I have placed on her finger temporarily only cost one thousand five hundred thalers ; and you will see, dearest mamma, that such an inferior ring is not suitable for the first present I offer to my beautiful bride. With your permission I must also give some presents to the Baroness von Pretlach and the Baroness von Edelsheim, to whom I owe so much ; moreover, we have been the guests of von Edelsheim.

¹ From the archives in Weimar.

Farewell, my ever dearest mother. Continue your proofs of love and graciousness to a son whose greatest desire is to be worthy of such a parent.

“Madam and very dear mother,

“With all respect to your royal highness,

“Your very obedient and submissive
son and servant,

“KARL.”

Three days later Karl writes again to thank his mother for her ready consent to all his wishes. He assures her he will do exactly as she has told him, and that he will lose no opportunity to tell Princess Louise of her goodness. Then the duchess writes to Görtz on December 24th, and tells him she encloses two letters for her son: one of these he is to read to the princess, the other is for himself. Then there are commissions and presents, and the count has a pretty long list of things to do; but there is a true womanly ring in the following words:—

“You know how tenderly I love my children; you will therefore understand the joy I feel that he has chosen the Princess Louise for his wife.

I am disappointed that I am not an eye-witness of the new situation in which my son finds himself. How does he play the lover? Is he very much in love?"

Karl was so much in love that he wanted the marriage to be celebrated at once, but the duchess held to the first plan, that he should visit the French capital and see the world. She gave permission, however, for Prince Constantine to visit Karlsruhe, accompanied by Knebel, and there to make the acquaintance of Klopstock, whose works were highly esteemed by the Landgraf, to whom Knebel read them aloud. Nevertheless, the court etiquette did not allow the composer of the *Messiah* to be received at court, as he was beneath the rank of a Minister of Legation.

This was a painful experience for the somewhat conceited poet, who, when he was seriously ill, had prayers offered that he might be preserved to Germany! Prince Constantine writes to the duchess that every one in Karlsruhe is making a fuss about Klopstock. But this did not soothe the poet's mortification. He left Karlsruhe in a very bad humour, and without taking leave of the court, and returned to Darmstadt, where no

such "ridiculous etiquette" prevented his being present at all court entertainments.

The princes, with Knebel in attendance, returned to Strasburg in February 1775, where they made close friendships which lasted through their lives. There is a great deal of interest of an old-world character in the letters written home by von Knebel and his charges.

"We have glimpses of a high, intellectual standard, which bridges over all differences of class or station, wealth or poverty, and establishes socialism of a mental character, for which we look elsewhere in vain in this so-called enlightened century."¹

From Strasburg the princes and their tutor travelled to Paris, which naturally charmed the young visitors. Karl August, in spite of being separated from his charming Louise, enjoyed himself, as a youth of his age naturally would do. His letters home are a little too historical for a young man visiting the gay French capital for the first time. It is hard to believe that he thought of nothing but the deeds of Turenne, Condé, Sully, and other heroes of the Fronde,

¹ "Life of Anna Amalia," by Bornhak.

not forgetting Henry of Navarre. His being in love made him presumably anxious to return to Weimar, where preparations had already begun for the marriage. But of this he says nothing.

"I long," he writes to the duchess, "for the moment when I shall embrace *you*, my beloved mother, again. Although the tranquillity of Weimar will seem strange to me after this gay city, the joy of being with you again will fill my heart with such gladness, that I shall have no room for any regret. I shall be overflowing with happiness."

It was, however, some months before he had this joy, for the princes did not return to Weimar till June 1775, their tour having lasted nine months. They had visited many places and made many friends, but the two principal features of these months of travel were the acquaintance made with Goethe and the engagement of Karl August. The last-named event seems to have drawn the young duke's heart nearer to his mother; as to this we have the testimony of von Fritsch, who, writing to the duchess, tells her that Herr von Stein talks of nothing "but the reverence and devotion the duke feels for the duchess

mother"; and then this admirable counsellor points out that since the Crown Prince attained his majority three months ago, and is, in fact, now the reigning duke, "it would be more politic not to fill up any office or place that falls vacant, but to leave them for his appointment later on." Also he advises that the duchess should conduct herself towards her son "more as a friend willing to offer advice than as a mistress who has the right to command." And lastly, he emphasises the *necessity* of concealing her dislike to Görtz.

Amalia (like the sensible woman she could be when not led astray by her affections) received this advice with hearty goodwill. She writes to Fritsch :

"I acknowledge gratefully the many services you have done for me during my regency, and the excellent advice you have given me. Therefore I shall now follow your counsel, and, for my son's sake, as well as for the general good, I shall act towards Görtz with friendly courtesy. But should he attack the persons who have proved their devotion to me, then it would be my duty to show him clearly with whom he has to deal. My son must understand that if he wants me

to stand by him in the future, he must reward handsomely those who have served me well. I ask nothing for myself, and I want nothing. My own conscience is my only reward; and I would wish you to believe that my friendship for you will never cease so long as I live.

“AMALIA.”

In spite of this amiable resolution, Anna Amalia desired with all her heart that Görtz, whom she looked upon as a dangerous counsellor for her son, should not be placed in any post where his baneful influence could affect her relations with her beloved children. It was in vain that Fritsch preached forbearance and temporising methods. The duchess was too sincere to play willingly a double part. She acknowledged that Görtz deserved recognition for his services towards her son, although it might be that these services were not to her liking, and therefore she was willing to reward what he had done liberally. So far back as 1774 she got this part of the business settled. Writing to Fritsch, July 2nd, 1774, she says:

“The Görtz affair is finally arranged. He

accepts a pension of fifteen hundred thalers and the title of first class Geheimerath—Privy Councillor. He wished to play the *rôle* of a disinterested man, who desired to be unfettered by court patronage, but the title of '*Excellency*' tickled his ears so much, that he could not refuse it. Please get the decree of dismissal put in hand at once and let us have done with the business."

But when the draft of the decree was submitted by Fritsch, the royal lady was highly incensed at the flattering terms in which it was couched.

"I find," she writes to the minister, "that there are in the decree two expressions, at least, which imply far too much gratitude on my part, and to which my conscience and sense of honesty prevent me from subscribing my signature. Far from praising his methods of education, I consider that Görtz has ruined my son's character, and has done so from the beginning. I beg you will correct these extravagant expressions and substitute others more in accordance with the truth."

In this letter Anna Amalia shows her dislike to the man, who she considered (and probably with justice) had sown dissension between herself and her well-loved son, and although the rift

had not been permanent, still the mother's heart could not forget this wound to her affections or forgive the man who had caused her suffering. Following the precedent set by her late husband in regard to the reward given to his tutor, the duchess issued a decree charging the provinces of Weimar, Eisenach, and Jena, with a parting gift for Count Görtz of 20,000 *thalers*. This tax was paid without a murmur. After doing so much, as she thought, it must have annoyed the duchess to find that these rewards were not in Karl August's opinion sufficient to prove his gratitude towards the man so distasteful to his royal mother. On September 12th, 1775, three days after his accession as reigning duke, he sent a rescript, or order, to the chambers, in which he gave to the count a gratification of four thousand thalers as a mark of his gratitude for the fidelity and devotion he had shown to him (Karl August).

CHAPTER V

ON September 3rd, 1775, Anna Amalia, who had not yet completed her thirty-sixth year, laid down her sceptre of office and willingly retired into the shade of private life. For seventeen years she had governed the little duchy committed to her care, with a discretion, prudence, and ability, truly wonderful in so youthful and inexperienced a ruler. Those who had watched her unobtrusive, ever-watchful endeavours to be as harmless as is the dove and not altogether without the cunning of the serpent, were filled with wonder for this young creature, who steered her course in difficult waters to the admiration of all.

During the first years of her reign a whirlwind of misfortune had swept over Germany. There had been a terrible war, in which Weimar, small as was its size, had borne its part; this had been followed by an equally disastrous famine. The conduct of the young duchess under circum-

stances of extraordinary difficulty was the theme of praise at every court in Europe ; her name was honoured wherever it was mentioned. The celebrated Grimm, envoy from Gotha to the Court of France, extolled this "wonderful duchess," in glowing terms :

"The hard reality of the present time turns into the romance of mythology, when we see before us a living representation of the Goddess Minerva, who has taken a human form amongst the romantic woods of Thuringia. She it is whose name shall be for ever immortalised in the annals of Saxony, and who will live in the history of mankind. But greater even than the immortality of history is the respect of contemporaries ; and here language itself fails to give an idea of the homage, the reverence, and the love excited by this wonderful princess."

After making due allowance for the German *schwärmerei*, which is conspicuous in this last somewhat laboured compliment, it is impossible to deny to Anna Amalia the praise which is called forth by her admirable administration of the charge left on her hands. Faults she may have had, errors of judgment she possibly made ; but

when we consider her extreme youth, her naturally gay disposition, her attractive appearance, our wonder grows that, living as she did in an age in which a really virtuous woman was the exception to the general rule, she should have conducted herself in so irreproachable a manner.

Nevertheless, virtuous as she was, she did not escape altogether the shafts of a malicious world. It was a coarse age, and in Weimar the coarseness was accentuated by the roughness of an uneducated, small-minded population.¹ For the rest, there does not seem to have been any ground for the innuendoes and whispers against Anna Amalia, which originated in malicious or idle gossip. Moreover, the duchess's inclinations led her in an altogether different direction. She aspired to be a *bel esprit*, and although not exceptionally gifted as were many of the women of her century, she had a lively imagination, a quick perception and an aptitude for study, in which, now that she had leisure from the cares of

¹ Some writers give a terrible picture of the low condition of morality in Weimar. Schiller, whose virtuous, gentle nature was in direct contrast to his friend Goethe, was astounded at the *laissez aller* of Weimar. "All the women," he says, "are coquettes."

governing, she allowed herself to indulge. The study of languages occupied the first place. Her preparations and compositions in English, Italian, Latin, and Greek, both in prose and verse, fill volumes; and her mind expanded and her style gained new vivacity and imagination by writing essays on different artistic subjects or abstruse questions, either scientific or philosophical. She made very fair translations of the Odes of Anacreon and Propertius, and, with the assistance of Wieland, even essayed Aristophanes. Her compositions, short considerations or maxims for daily use, show thoughtfulness and delicacy, and are altogether free from the curse of plagiarism. Her "Gedanken" especially are worthy of notice. Here are a few examples :

"He who wishes to rule others should first understand how to govern himself, and how can a man who is not happy in himself give happiness to others ? "

"Contempt for women is the outcome of immorality. Mutual esteem should exist between the sexes; it knits together the bands of social life. Where this is not to be found, the man abandons himself to his savage instincts, becomes

self-seeking, and virtue is driven from its rightful position."

Amalia had an agreeable taste for musical composition, as is shown by the little operas she occasionally wrote. From childhood to old age she sought, by learning from different masters and by constant practice, to attain proficiency in painting, but it is best to draw a veil over her efforts in this direction. Although she never was more than a feeble amateur artist, nevertheless the duchess's judgment as to the artistic value of a painting or statue was of value, and often astonished professional judges. She was undoubtedly intelligent in matters of art, and also on most subjects she could say like Leonora :

"I rejoice when clever men do entertain each other
That I can understand their excellent discourse,
And where'er such controversy doth entangle them,
I can follow their devious paths and turnings."

Like our late queen and other intellectual women, the duchess had a distinct gift for governing, and no one with any fairness could dispute that her administration of the duchy during her son's minority had been in every way admirable.

It was, therefore, only natural that she found it difficult to disassociate herself all at once from what

had been the absorbing interest of her life for eighteen years. That it would have been wiser for her to have held to her first resolution of non-interference, there is little doubt ; and to this conclusion she herself arrived in course of time. But allowance must be made for the anxiety of a mother for a young and inexperienced son, who was running, as she thought, into all manner of danger through evil counsels. The evil counsellor was, of course, her *bête noire*, Görtz, who, in spite of her efforts to thrust him into the shade of retirement by the bribe of the title of Excellency, had executed the old trick, *reculer pour mieux sauter* ; and now, like jack-in-the-box, he jumped up as fresh as ever, his former pupil loading him with honours.

At the marriage of the duke it was Görtz who accompanied him to Darmstadt ; and the post of court marshal to the young duchess was bestowed upon him, this office bringing him in constant communication with the duke, who took his advice on all points.

Anna Amalia endeavoured to counteract what she considered an unfortunate and malign influence by drawing to the court men of equally strong but

more trustworthy character. Here is a letter dated September 5th, 1775, addressed to Minister von Fritsch, begging him to be sure to come to the Council meeting to be held the following day, when Statthalter von Dalberg would confer with Karl August on a subject which is not named, but is indicated in the following extract.¹

"I can tell you nothing definite, only this, that if the Statthalter is not made thoroughly acquainted with the business in all its bearings, I very much fear that Görtz will carry his measure, and then no one will have the courage to tell my son he has made a great blunder."

A private letter from Count Dalberg to Görtz proves that the duchess had grounds to suspect that the quondam governor's influence was not exercised beneficially. This letter bears date July 18th, 1775.

¹ So far back as May 1775, Fritsch had talked of resigning, being inclined to take this step in consequence of many difficulties and annoyances. In consequence of his father's advice he did not act on this first intention. The older politician writes to his son that it was his duty to remain in office and to act the part of a faithful servant, who is always on the watch with a water-bottle with which he qualifies the wine when it is too strong. But, although Fritz followed his father's advice, circumstances became too strong for him to occupy office much longer.

"I swear you to secrecy, my dear count, for this is a privileged communication. *Take care what you are about*, for it seems to me that Karl August begins rashly. What is the object of these sudden changes? The report is that he does not get on with his mother, and on more than one occasion I have heard it mentioned that the fault is altogether on his side. This is the more to be regretted, for his mother fulfilled her duty as his guardian well."

As is generally the case, gossip exaggerated the friction which undoubtedly existed between mother and son, the reports that flew about that the duchess had resolved to leave Weimar being absolutely untrue. Those about the Court were well aware that, in spite of a not unnatural and boyish elation at his sudden emancipation, which made him self-assertive and restless at any attempt to control him, the young duke's love and respect for his mother were unshaken by the new position in which he found himself. He was willing not only to ask, but to follow her advice; and in difficult circumstances (many such arose in the first year of his rule) he availed himself gladly of her personal intervention.

So far as the influence of Count Görtz was in question, it was, although he had no prescience of coming downfall, very near its termination. For the rest, the *rôle* of court favourite is always a dangerous one to fill, all violent delights being liable to violent endings. Neither was Görtz possessed of a strong enough character to keep the influence he had gained by being a kind and indulgent—perhaps too indulgent—governor. The days for holidays and lollipops were over, and Duke Karl, nearing manhood, saw men and things with the quick perception inherited from Amalia. He required stronger mental food than could be supplied by the flattery and stale maxims of his former guide and friend. At this moment the future of Karl was trembling in the balance of uncertainty ; it altogether depended upon the hands into which he would fall.

In October 1775 the count was still in the ascendant, and was chosen by the duke to accompany him to Darmstadt, on the occasion of his marriage to Princess Louise of Hesse Darmstadt. The wedding festivities were of great magnificence. The young pair, after a week of gaieties, left for Weimar, staying on the way at Frankfurt.

There Karl August saw his friend Goethe¹ and introduced him to his beautiful bride, for whom the poet was filled with the most passionate admiration, an admiration which he always continued to express in prose and verse. He gladly accepted the pressing invitation given by the youthful couple to pay a long visit to Weimar; and all the arrangements were made before Karl August parted from his new friend.

The newly married Duchess Louise bases her claims to our attention not on her own merits—for at present her record is little more than a blank sheet of paper—but on the high reputation of her mother, Caroline Henrietta, to whom one of the most intellectual of her own generation had given the title of "The Great Landgräfin." She made her mark in a period which abounded, so to speak, in remarkable women. She united a tender woman's heart to masculine courage, extraordinary judgment and feminine tact. Witness her submission to Landgraf Karl Friedrich, a man of the most singular character. Narrow were the limits in which she had to move, and constant strife marked her life, which passed in one long struggle

¹ See Goethe's "Life."



CAROLINE HENRIETTA LANDGRÄFIN OF HESSE DARMSTADT.

[p. 146.]



with the fate to which she was condemned united to a man for whom it was impossible she could care.

In those first years likewise the country was miserably poor, war after war having drained every available resource. She describes in a satirical manner a masked ball which took place in honour of Karl Friedrich's birthday, and which reminds one of a parallel description to be found in the memoirs of Wilhelmina, Margravine of Bayreuth. Caroline found her only pleasure in her visits to the court of Berlin and her intercourse with her "hero" as she called Frederick the Great.¹

Here, too, as we know, she met our Anna Amalia, with whom she cemented a close alliance. The delightful duchess with her delicate pointed fingers had more artistic tastes than the strong-minded Landgräfin. The two women, notwithstanding this, and perhaps even in consequence of the contrast, grew attached to one another, and, out of their mutual liking came the idea of being more closely connected by the marriage

¹ With whom she was connected by the marriage of her daughter Frederica with Prince Friedrich Wilhelm of Prussia, who succeeded Frederick the Great as king.

of their children, the great king giving his full consent that so it should be.

But before this was to happen a stormy time had to be gone through—years of struggle and poverty, and, worse still for the Landgräfin, of domestic unhappiness, for the Landgraf Karl Friedrich developed all his bad qualities and gained no good ones. He can be described as Carlyle's mother described her famous son, "ill to live with." In fact, Duke Karl must have gone a little further than the sage of Chelsea, for *his* wife, the Landgräfin, could not live with him—or perhaps it was he couldn't live with her. Anyway, he decided to remove himself with all his impedimenta, including his fine stud of horses and splendid dogs, not forgetting his pages-in-waiting, to Pirmonez, where he pleased himself, leading a military life which was the one best suited to him. Before his departure he constituted his wife Regent. This looks like a recognition of her high gifts, as no doubt it was in a sense, for the Landgraf knew he could trust her with this delegated authority.

Still, when the matter is looked into, the amount of confidence shown was not so gratifying, and it resolved itself into this, that, although the Land-

gräfin had the luxury of being delivered from daily contact with a tyrant, she was still under his rod ; her authority was only nominal ; she was not allowed to sign any important document or issue any decree without the duke's permission. Every day a courier left for Pirmonez with the papers for the duke's signature and for his orders, together with a schedule of her daily expenses. She was to undertake no works for improving the town without his permission ; in fact, she was a cipher and at the same time she had to work as a slave.

A less generous woman than Caroline would have found some way of paying off a husband who showed so little confidence. The Landgräfin's was, however, a high-minded nature and had the wisdom to avoid making any scandal. She knew that pride amounting to madness was the Landgraf's ruling passion, and she was judicious as well as good-tempered in submitting to the inevitable, and by this means generally succeeded in getting her own way. Once only did she evade his orders, in the matter of drawing up the conditions relative to the proposal of marriage made by the Empress of Russia, regarding an alliance between the future Czar, and one of the Landgraf's

daughters. Here Caroline made use of a woman's ruse to prevent the ridiculous and inflated proposals of the Landgraf reaching the Russian Court. For the rest she always kept on terms with her exigent husband and wrote to him every day.¹

At a distance she seems to have had more influence over her strange husband than at close quarters, and succeeded in inducing him to summon Friedrich von Moser to Darmstadt in the capacity of Minister. His social reforms caused widespread astonishment. In the end Moser was dismissed and persecuted. The Landgräfin, however, believed in him and only in her later days said that he was a traitor. The correspondence between the Landgräfin and the statesman lasted for years, and is a wonderful record—not more wonderful, however, than the immense correspondence of the period. No one who was born in the eighteenth century could escape the craze of the day, letter writing. I know one should be duly grateful that this craze—I can find no other word

¹ The Landgraf was not so insensible to his wife's merits as he appeared. He kept all the letters his wife had ever written him in a pocket-book, which he carried always in his breast. Such are the curious eccentricities of the human mind.

for it—did exist, but with all my gratitude my surprise still continues. It is well known that the constant scribbling injured both the health and the eyes of our ancestresses, but no medical prohibition had any effect. The Landgräfin's correspondents were highly distinguished, including such men as Grimm, Gellert, Voltaire, and Klopstock, who after a little time made his home at Darmstadt, the Landgräfin delighting to honour the author of the "Messiah." Wieland also had a share in her regard, and had helped with Lessing and her faithful Ravenell in teaching her to drink deeper of the well of Knowledge. It was Goethe who added the word "Great" to the title Landgräfin; and was it not Wieland who wished that he was for one half-hour lord of the universe, that he might create the good Landgräfin empress of the world?

The more one knows of the Landgräfin, the more one feels convinced that she was a woman of whom too much has not been said, and who deserved the reputation given her by her contemporaries. She was well-read, her reading being not superficial but well digested. Her mind was therefore amply stored with the knowledge of

different subjects. There was no showy superficiality about her but a sterling solid basis for an excellent judgment, for she never read for the purpose of saying she had read such and such a book, but because she wished to read it for the improvement of her own mind and in order to make a correct estimate of its merits.

Her remarks on Klopstock's "Messiah" are somewhat surprising, when we remember the popularity the work and the author had both attained. Writing to Zückmantel, she gives her opinion that, taken as a whole, the poem is somewhat dull reading, but that here and there are some beautiful passages. In the same letter she tells him she is sending him Gessner's "Death of Abel," with which his friends seem well pleased, and she adds :

"I have not yet read Gellert's 'Swedish Countess,' but it will give me much pleasure if you will make its acquaintance;" meaning that she is sending him this new book as well.

In one of her letters to the great German scholar Pütter, with whom she had struck up a friendship at Göttingen, she writes :

"You will perhaps recall the words we inter-

changed on the occasion when I had the great pleasure to make your personal acquaintance at Göttingen. Our conversation had reference to the desire the Landgraf entertained to induce you to come to Giessen. I shared in this wish before I had the pleasure of knowing you, and the gratification I experienced in conversing with you has much strengthened this desire. Privy Councillor Hesse has orders to confer with you on this subject. It would rejoice me if the proposal made by him should be found sufficiently tempting to induce a man of your distinction to accept our proposal. Everything that is in my power I shall gladly do, in order to procure for Darmstadt such an incomparable benefit as your acceptance of the position would confer.

“Your very affectionate servant,

“CAROLINE VON HESSE.”

There is a great charm in Caroline's letters, and in this one especially. Notwithstanding this, it failed to lure the learned Professor Pütter from the time-honoured Göttingen to the more mushroom university of Giessen. The whole of her correspondence is marked by a tone of extraordinary

sincerity, which gives one a key to the sort of woman she was.¹

One is sorry to find this amiable and sensible woman adopting the vagaries of the sentimental school of *Schöngeist* or "Souls," which played a great part in Germany and later on, in a modified form, as the romantic school in France. The sentimentalists, men and women, were full to overflowing of the milk of human kindness—or to use a more appropriate expression—human love. They loved every one : they wept for the sorrows of the whole world : they were full of sensibility of the highest order. Sentimental novels were all the rage, stories by Rousseau and Julie Bondeli being often written in verse. Most young girls read these silly compilations, fancied themselves in love, and often committed all manner of follies. Goethe in his early youth was tinged with a good deal of this sentimentality, and fancied himself the victim of terrible love epidemics.

The queen of sentimentalists was, however, Sophie de la Roche, who in her sentimental love

¹ The original correspondence (a voluminous one) of the Landgräfin is written in French, which at this period was the polite language, especially at courts.

for the world in general was ready to embrace, not metaphorically but actually, every one of her friends, irrespective of their sex. We read of strange doings at the Congress of Sentimentalists which took place in Darmstadt in the spring of 1771. It was largely attended, the meetings being held at Sophie's house, several distinguished sentimentalists being present ; amongst them Gleim, then an old man, but addicted to platonic attachments and paternal endearments ; the Jacobi brothers, true sentimentalists ; also Wieland, then about to leave Darmstadt for Erfurt.¹

Merck was also a member of this absurd school, and there was a young man named Leuchfering who mixed himself in its concerns. He was twenty-three years of age and held a position of trifling importance in the household of the crown prince of Hesse Darmstadt, whom he likewise accompanied on his travels. Leuchfering was of a curious, fantastic temperament and his sensibility was so excessive that, on hearing any sad or touching news (even though it in no way

¹ Goethe's "Werther" was the outcome of sentimentalism, so were Frau de la Roche's novels, and many others of the same stamp, inculcating a maudlin sensibility.

concerned him or any of his friends) he was apt to weep copiously. He was likewise much given to talking of his own love affairs. He was a poor sort of creature and suited for the part he undertook in the development of the sentimental craze, which, by its foolish doctrines, and especially by means of the pernicious literature¹ it encouraged, and indeed inflated, was the cause of many evils, suicides becoming common. It seems extraordinary that a woman so strong-minded and practical as was the Landgräfin should have put herself at the head of such a movement as this.

To look at her portrait one would say there was not much mock sentiment in the kind, honest eyes and thoroughly practical face. She was nevertheless heart and soul bound up in the fad of the day. She had delightful meetings in the gardens of

¹ Frau de la Roche's novel was called "The Romance of Sternheim." "Sophie de la Roche," writes Merck, "is a woman of good family with court manners. She speaks French better than German, and her mind travels with extraordinary rapidity from the deepest subject to the gayest trifle. She puts on her mask of sensibility at will." He also makes the discovery which occasionally happens to many of us, who find that our literary idol speaks and acts in an opposite manner to what he writes. Fortunately for Merck, in this instance, Frau de la Roche spoke infinitely better than she wrote.



GOETHE WITH MERCK'S CHILDREN. MERCK IS STANDING WITH CAROLINE FLACHSLAND
IN WHITE, NEAR THE WINDOW, SEPTEMBER 1772.



CAROLINE ZIEGLER, SENTIMENTALIST.

the palace and all manner of fine high-flown talk. The "souls" had all sorts of names, Urania, and Psyche, etc. One foolish girl had her grave all ready made in her garden, and often shed tears and laid flowers on it. This same sentimental soul—her name was Fräulein von Zeigler—had a pet lamb which she led by a blue ribbon.

Goethe, in the first flush of his youth, came to see Klopstock, who lived under the shadow of the great Landgräfin's protection. Caroline Flachsland, who rejoiced in the spirit name of Psyche, wrote to her lover, Herder :

"Goethe is one of us and a good-natured, merry young man, without much elegance. He is very much taken up with Merck's children, and has a certain something, I cannot say exactly what it is, that reminds me of you, so that I like to see him and to talk to him."

And again Psyche Caroline tells her lover how much Goethe reverences him (Herder). Caroline was a confidante of the Lili episode and was sorry for the poor young man, feeling sure that Lili would never marry beneath her.

One of the last acts of the great Landgräfin was her journey to Russia, accompanied by her three

daughters, one of whom was to be the chosen bride of the heir to the empire. This does not seem a very dignified proceeding, but the prize to be won was great, and on these occasions dignity sometimes has to take a back seat. The Landgräfin, however, travelled with great pomp, having a large suite amongst whom figured "friend Merck." A curious incident happened on the journey. One night she was roused out of her sleep by the sudden opening of the door of the *berline* in which she was travelling, and saw a number of faces regarding her curiously by the light of several lanterns. Their disappointment when they saw her wrinkled face amused her, as did their turning their lanterns on the princesses. Their exclamation, "Ah! that one in the left-hand corner, she is the one for us!" explained that this midnight visit was only due to anxiety to see their future empress.

A fleet of three frigates was sent to convoy the royal ladies to St. Petersburg, the Empress Catherine writing:

"I expect you, honoured madame, with impatience, and long to welcome you and your daughters the princesses, to my court. It will

give me happiness to know one whom I esteem so highly, and with all sentiments of regard I am your affectionate cousin,

“CATHERINE.”

General Rehbindér was sent with this letter, and accompanied the royal ladies to St. Petersburg and introduced them to Count Orloff, whose house was placed at the Landgräfin's service. On their arrival Orloff told them a lady was waiting anxiously to see them. This turned out to be Catherine. It must have been a strange meeting: the small, insignificant-looking German princess, standing before the queenlike and splendid ruler of the great northern nation with her magnificence, her cruelty, and her unbridled passions, a veritable modern Semiramis.

At the semi-barbarous court the great mental gifts of the Landgräfin were fully recognised, while the charms of her lovely trio of daughters won all hearts. Curiously enough, the words of the rough intruders came true. Princess Wilhelmina, who had occupied the left-hand corner of the *berline*, being the chosen bride of the young bridegroom, Paul. Through all the

subsequent *pourparlers* the Landgräfin played the part of the wise, prudent mother, and showed as before-mentioned, a true diplomatic nature, by hurrying on all negotiations, so that everything was signed and concluded before Karl Friedrich's absurd proposals arrived by courier.

The only thing left to be done was to celebrate the marriage, which took place as soon as the consent of the Landgraf arrived ; and then the Landgräfin, refusing the invitations of the empress and the entreaties of poor Wilhelmina, who clung to her own people, set forth on her home journey, for she felt that it was a wager between her and King Death. She made the journey despite all obstacles of snowstorms and icebergs, and at last reached Homburg, where she rested a few days with her eldest daughter (married to the grand-duke of Baden), then she turned her steps homeward. She had just finished a letter to her husband describing a cabinet she had bought for her natural history specimens, when she passed away quietly. According to her wish she was buried without any tolling of bells or court ceremonials. Frederick the Great had the following inscription placed upon her tombstone :

Femina sexu ingenio vir—By sex a woman, in intellect a man.

Her daughter Wilhelmina, for whose advantage she had made the journey which hastened her death, survived her mother barely three years, dying in childbirth, in April 1776.

Of the Landgräfin's daughters (there were five), three were married before her death, one to the Crown Prince of Prussia, another to Prince Paul of Russia, the eldest to the Markgraf of Baden, and, of the two remaining, Louise married Karl August.

The Markgräfin of Baden-Baden was a most accomplished woman. In her early youth she had been elected member of the Fine Arts Academy in Copenhagen; in 1783 the Roman Pastori Arcadi paid her a like honour. Had she lived, she would have gained further distinction for her botanical researches, but she died in Paris, whither she had gone for her health, and where she was occupied in further botanical studies under the guidance of Le Sage and Lavoisier.

We must now return to the young pair we left at Frankfurt, where, in the first glow of their honeymoon, they had gone to visit Goethe.

This almost ideal marriage, which had been for many years the cherished wish of Anna Amalia, seemed to possess every condition necessary to ensure happiness, the princess being not only gifted with beauty, but of a noble, high-minded character. At first sight, therefore, nothing seemed to be lacking in this union ; and yet somehow, at all events in the first years, it failed to ensure the happiness of the wedded pair. In spite of her statuesque loveliness—"an angel in woman's form," Goethe called her—Louise lacked the qualities which were necessary, to enable her to hold the affections of the boyish duke, whose nature though frank and loving, was yet wanting in constancy. His temperament was warm, passionate, frank ; hers, reticent, cold, and faithful. She loved her husband with all the strength of her great soul, and yet was incapable of showing her love. She was, however, capable of extraordinary forbearance, self-sacrifice, and virtue.

She had spent two or three years in Russia with her sister, the wife of the Grand Duke Paul ; and there she had been trained in the observance of the strictest etiquette, and had been taught to keep all those beneath a certain rank at a distance, as

not worthy of her friendship or notice. Any breach of decorum, any want of respect, she resented as an offence ; and likewise any lack of dignity in those who were in high position. This stiff, quiet, regular and cold-blooded formality was totally opposed to Karl August's free and easy mode of life ; and as a natural consequence their marriage, especially in the early years, was unhappy.

Goethe, who had a passionate admiration for the beauty and the character of the angelic Louise, says : "I looked into her soul, and only that mine was all aglow for her, that glance would have frozen me."

And yet this poor young princess was much to be pitied. Not only was she displeased with the want of etiquette at the court, but she was gravely disappointed in the characters of both her husband and mother-in-law, which failed to accord with her more rigid ideas of what was dignified and proper. She felt hurt and injured in her own self-esteem by what she considered their want of self-respect. At first she remonstrated with her husband in a tone of passionate complaint ; but as no steps were taken to change

the *laissez aller* that prevailed, the duchess withdrew more and more from the tumultuous gaieties of the court, refusing absolutely to have any share in undignified entertainments, from which every shadow of etiquette was banished.

This withdrawal annoyed the duke, who, after the arrival of Goethe, absented himself sometimes for weeks together. The duchess, who resented this neglect, complained of it in her letters to her sister and intimate friends; and these complaints, from being made the subject of feminine tittle tattle, lost nothing when repeated to others. In this way the first initiative was given to the exaggerated reports, which were afterwards current, of the wild orgies which sometimes took place at Weimar.

Most justifiable were the complaints made by the bride of the lack of comfort in the royal household. She tells her sister that nothing had been prepared for her arrival. There was no palace or castle, for, as we know, the Residenz had been burned down, and in the house chosen by the young duke there was not even a kitchen; everything had to be cooked in the "Red House" and carried across to the duke's residence. The

servants and certain court officials, occupied the original Standhaus, where there were also some rooms set apart for guests. In the new building, the duchess's suite of apartments was on the first floor. On the second the duke had his private rooms, and the third was given up to the duchess's first mistress of the robes, *oberhofmeisterin*, and the ladies-in-waiting.

The Countess Wilhelmina Elizabeth Eleonore von Gianini, who occupied the dignified position of *oberhofmeisterin* to the duchess, was a most formal and forbidding person, whose anxiety that neither her own dignity nor that of the royal lady she served should receive any slight was the cause of great amusement to the young Goethe when, later on, he joined the court circle. This same old lady proved anything but amusing to the duke, who from the first detested her and her punctilio. Louise had likewise imported two maids of honour, Fräulein Marianne Henriette von Wollworth, and Louise Adelaide von Waldner-Freudenstein, a pair of starched and dignified pieces of propriety, walking dictionaries of court etiquette, and in the eyes of the dowager duchess most objectionable. The estrangement

which from the first moment showed itself between the old and the young duchesses was accentuated when the Duchess Louise, one month after her arrival, appointed Countess Görtz to be one of her ladies-in-waiting.

The duke's gentlemen-in-waiting were the handsome Count Wedel, eighteen years of age, the romantic Einsiedel, brother to the Falstaffian chamberlain of the same name, and Count Werther, a bold rider, who cared for no risk or danger. A hard drinker was the count, and a careless husband to a very pretty wife, about whom and the duke some ripples of scandal were set going. In these early days Louise was much attracted by the sympathetic manners and resigned sadness of Charlotte von Stein, the neglected wife of the Herr von Stein, master of the ceremonies to the duke. The friendship, however, did not last long. "The Stein has too many lovers to suit my wife," said the duke, and this remark applied to most of the ladies of the court.

It must be taken into consideration that the life at Weimar—especially during the early years of the duchess's married life—differed considerably

from the more elegant courts of Karlsruhe and Darmstadt, as also from the uncivilised, but nevertheless magnificent, court of St. Petersburg. The town of Weimar at the time of Karl August's marriage (although very different from the condition it was in when Amalia was brought there as a bride) was a small, insignificant place; its population, which did not exceed seven thousand souls, was poor, while the town itself looked poverty-stricken. Anna Amalia had done her part in trying to improve such matters as the lighting of the streets and the condition of the houses; still, even ten years later, Schiller called it *the village of Weimar*, and in comparison he considered Jena a large town. Herder also speaks of "that desert Weimar, half village, half capital." In a geographical annual called *The Traveller*, we read that Weimar was a second-rate place, which could not compare with Jena, either in cleanliness, situation, or in the architecture of the houses.

In 1775 the city walls were still standing. Gates and portcullises gave testimony to times of warfare. Within these walls were six or seven hundred houses containing about seven thousand inhabitants all told. The city gates were strictly

guarded, no one could pass through them without leaving his name in the sentinel's book. Even Goethe, favourite as he was known to be, and minister to boot, could not escape this tiresome formality, as is evident from one of his letters to Frau von Stein, directing her to go out *alone* and meet him *outside* the gate, lest their exit together should be inscribed in the book. There was little safety at night in the streets of Weimar, for if you escaped the thieves who were prowling about, you ran the danger of falling into a hole and breaking your leg, the streets being badly lighted, and in some places not lighted at all.

The absence of luxury, or even ordinary comfort, may be gathered from the "Memoirs" of the time. Such necessities as locks to doors, curtains that could draw, or beds in which one could sleep comfortably, were not to be found all over the Continent, and even in England there was room for improvement in such matters. We read in Wilhelmina of Bayreuth's "Memoirs," her account of the reception she received on her arrival at the Markgraf's (her father-in-law's) palace after her marriage, the want of every comfort necessary,

even for an ordinary lady, to say nothing of a king's daughter ; and yet how sumptuous were the court toilettes, what laces, what jewels !

Weimar was probably on a better footing than Bayreuth, and if we are to judge by the appointments of the royal residences—Ettersburg, Belvedere, Tiefurt—there is evidence of considerable comfort and even luxury. The Louis Quatorze beds, where a family could have slept (although according to our notions of hygiene eminently unhealthy), are wonderful specimens of ornamentation and carving. So, too, with the toilette appliances. The jugs and basins (in size only fit for a doll's house) are, some of them, of china that would delight the eye of a connoisseur. Nevertheless, in the houses of the middle class and in those of many of the richer merchants the deficiencies were remarkable ; chairs and tables were almost universally made of common deal, for not until the close of the eighteenth century did mahogany become general. Looking-glasses were introduced early in the century, but were a luxury of the nobility and richer merchants.

The palace, which is now such an adornment to Weimar, was at this time not yet built ; and the

duke and duchess inhabited the Fürstenhaus, about which Karl August was always grumbling.

Karl August was, as the reader has already gathered, no ordinary character. At fourteen Frederick the Great (his grand uncle) declared that of all the princes he had seen Karl gave the greatest promise ; and this promise was realised, although not perhaps in its fullest development. Karl August had many fine qualities, one of the most conspicuous being his keen appreciation of genius.

"It is easy," says a well-known writer, "for a prince to assemble men of talent. It is not easy for him to make them remain beside him in the full employment of their faculties and in reasonable enjoyment of their position. Karl August was the prince who, with the smallest means, produced the greatest results in Germany."¹

His disposition was overbearing and imperious, his manner often rough and brusque ; but his heart was excellent, his courage beyond a doubt. He was a good soldier and a first-rate comrade in the field or in garrison, but somewhat out of his element in foreign courts and drawing-rooms.

¹ "Anna Amalia u. Karl August," Beaulieu Marconnau.

And yet there was a poetic enjoyment of nature enshrined under this rough exterior. In a letter of the duke's which has not been printed, he writes to Goethe, then at Jena, saying that he longs to be with him to watch the sunrise and sunset; for in Gotha he cannot see the sun, hidden as it is by the crowd of courtiers, who are so *comme il faut* and know their "fish duty" with such terrible accuracy, that every evening he feels obliged to give himself up to the devil. The delight of this young duke, when not with soldiers, was to be with his dogs; and yet he had a mind full of romance and *schwärmerei*. He would discuss philosophy with Goethe by the hour, talking of lovely things that conquer death.

"Riding across country over rock and stream in manifest peril of his neck, teasing the maids of honour—sometimes carrying this so far as to offend his more stately wife—wandering alone with his dogs or with some joyous companion, seeking excitement in wine and in making love to pretty women, offending in his roughness and wilfulness, though never estranging, his friends—Karl August, though he often grieved his

admirers, was with all his errors a genuine and admirable character."

"He was always for progress," writes Goethe to Eckermann. "When anything failed he dismissed it at once from his mind. I often troubled myself how to excuse this or that failure, but he ignored every shortcoming in the cheerfullest way, and always went forward to something new."

In his early youth he showed this steadiness of purpose and fidelity in friendship. That Görtz was rather an unfortunate choice as a tutor does not alter the admiration one feels for the gratitude shown by the youth to the man who had been his friend. It was from Anna Amalia that Karl August had inherited this warm, loving temperament; from his father came something of the weakly constitution. The portrait here reproduced was taken at the age of eighteen, the period when he was released from Count Görtz's tutelage and became his own master for the first time. One can see in the boyish face signs of the strong will, which would have its own way,—sometimes obstinately and unwisely, while the mouth betrays passion of a different

order. That he was aware of his own tendencies is shown by a letter, written in his twenty-fourth year, to his brother's tutor, Von Knebel.

"I must restrain my inclination and not allow my heart to follow its own way without rein or bridle. It is very difficult, however, to do this in the unnatural position in which one's life is cast."

These words give a certain insight into the curious mixture of right and wrong, good and evil, that made up the really fine character of Karl August. He was a man, every inch of him, and a good man too, although not quite the angel that the good people of Weimar would have us believe, for Karl August's memory is adored by the inhabitants of that primitive, interesting and altogether charming town. When one reflects on what it must be for a boy of eighteen to be absolute master of himself, to command where he was accustomed to obey, the wonder is not that he makes a total shipwreck, as did poor mad Ludwig of Bavaria, but that he should even make a fair offer at straight steering. Karl August knew that the power

was altogether in his hands. He could, had he been so minded, have brought his little duchy in a very short space of time into a pretty state of confusion, especially with his somewhat wild proclivities. He was saved from this by his mother's loving influence, and by his own attachment for Goethe. And although some writers have tried to prove that Goethe's influence was injurious, any one who reads the story of Goethe's life must (if free from bias) acknowledge that, with occasional exceptions, the poet's influence was for good.

Karl August's principal faults were his rashness and his roughness, his way of expressing himself being sometimes more that of a peasant than a prince. When Goethe's father died, we find him writing in his letter of condolence :

"He is now, a corpse and your mother can at last breathe freely. Malicious tongues say this is about the best march past the old fellow ever did."

It could not be said that he had a taste for low society ; nevertheless, he disliked to be in any company where he was obliged to be on his good behaviour. Goethe, who accompanied his

friend on a visit to the Court of Brunswick, writes to Frau von Stein :

“Our good duke bores himself to extinction. The strict observance of etiquette which prevails here is not to his liking ; he has to go without his beloved pipe of tobacco, and a fairy could confer no greater favour on him than to transform this fine palace into a woodman’s cottage.” His habits were undoubtedly rough ; he was seldom to be seen without a pipe in his mouth, and he loved horses and dogs. He often brought his favourite deerhound into the bedroom of the duchess Louise, who showed her displeasure at this intrusion.

Goethe remarked on this occasion that they were both in the wrong. The duke ought to have left the beast *outside*, but once he had got in, the duchess should have allowed him to stay.

Karl August loved all manner of jokes, and the rougher they were the more to his taste, while he carried his teasing of the court ladies much too far. Goethe, in a letter to Frau von Stein, remarks :

“I am no longer surprised that royalties are so

stupid and even silly in their behaviour, when a man like the duke, who has always been surrounded by intelligent men, and whose friends know the usages of Society, at times behaves himself like a ploughboy. He really wishes to do what is just and right, and yet acts in a directly contrary manner. His intelligence and good judgment are surprising, and yet if he does anything good, he immediately does something so stupid that his waxlight becomes a farthing rushlight."

In *Wilhelm Meister* (into which Goethe, has introduced many things which occurred during the first year of his residence at the Court of Weimar, as well as portrayed many of his friends, more or less disguised) the following passage occurs, which undoubtedly is a reproduction of what must have happened to Karl August:—

"The head keeper, soon after the opening of the piece, had lit his pipe and began to take further liberties. His large dogs soon came on the scene. It was true they had been shut up, but managed to find their way to the theatre, and ran on to the stage, where they caused considerable confusion, knocking against the actors and frightening the women. Suddenly they caught

sight of their master in the pit, and with one bound leaped across the orchestra to him."

On another occasion, speaking of the duke, he says: "One would love him dearly, were it not that his rude ways alienate his friends, while his rashness makes them indifferent as to what he does." All those who knew Karl August deplored his rash and foolish adventures, which often placed his life in danger, owing to the delicacy of his constitution, which, especially in his early youth, was ill-calculated to withstand the risks to which he exposed himself. It was in vain that his mother entreated, and his doctor ordered, more tranquillity in his manner of life. One might as well think of putting a bridle on an untrained horse. Neither could he, if he would, keep quiet. "He has got St. Vitus's dance in his royal limbs; he can neither sit still himself nor allow any one else to remain still."

Goethe has to confess that although the duke's existence is wrapped up in hunting and shooting, the course of business goes on slowly and surely, and that he takes a willing and painstaking part therein, and now and again does a good stroke of work. "But I don't want or wish to be always

set up as a bugbear, and he never asks the others for their opinion, or consults them as to what he should do."

One would think that this deference to his opinion would have been flattering to Geheimerath Goethe, who ought to have been grateful for the friendship of the boyish duke ; but Goethe, who was his senior by nearly eight years, was past the season when breaking one's neck seems a trifle, in comparison to the delightful excitement of the risk.

"We were often," he writes, "as near death as men could be, and the death I least desire. I admit that there is excitement in this steeple-chase over hedges, ditches, and graves, through rivers, up mountains, down hills, all day long in the saddle, and at night camping out in the woods under the canopy of heaven. All this frenzy of rush and clatter was more to his mind than his ducal inheritance. He cared little for the dignity, and would have willingly exchanged it for the wild life of a hunter."

Living so much in the open air naturally engendered in the young prince's mind a true love for Nature, which he preserved through his

life. There is a refreshing ring in his letter from Gotha (where he was on a visit to the Duke of Coburg) to Goethe.

“Oh! if I could only draw a free breath in the pure morning air and see the sun rise behind the rocks, and watch it go to sleep at night, and have you with me. The castle here is so high and is built on such an ugly plan. It is so full of crawling, servile creatures clad in velvet and silk, that I grow sick and dizzy.”

In a letter to his brother's tutor, Knebel, he writes a really poetical description.

“This is my first night of freedom (we shook the dust of Gotha off our shoes this morning). I can breathe freer, for I am far away from the civilised world. A human being was never intended to be a miserable Philistine, working for his daily bread. There is nothing raises the soul like seeing the sun sinking behind the horizon, the stars coming forth. A cool breeze rises . . . the day is done. And this panorama of loveliness is not for us . . . it would go on were we all in space. I will go and bathe with the evening star to light me. . . . The water was cold—it was as if I plunged into the cold night. As I made the first

step it was so pure, so clear, so dark. The blood-red moon rose behind the mountain ; in the distance I heard Wedel's horn."¹

There is a touch of romance in this description which is very pleasing.

As a natural consequence this admiration for Nature engendered in the duke's mind a desire to learn something of her secrets ; and this search induced an alteration in his manner of life, for the lover of Nature is a hater of lavish display and vain glitter, and is more at ease in simple surroundings. Any one who would wish to see with his eyes how the young worshipper of Nature followed the teachings of Nature herself, should see the Borkenhaus in the park of Weimar. It is now used to keep garden implements ; but small and lowly as it is, Karl August spent there many a night in summer. He slept there quite alone, there being no room for an attendant. He could see across the meadow on the other side of the park the Gartenhaus, where Goethe likewise enjoyed the delight of solitude.

It will be seen from what has been said, that Karl August, despite his faults of temper and

¹ Wedel, the handsome master of the horse.

his natural roughness, differed from the usual pattern of royal princes, and even from ordinary individuals. And so thought Goethe, who in his old age said to Eckermann :

“Karl August was born a great man ; he had a compound nature, and had he lived in the Attic days, the Greeks would have said he had a mixture of god and man and demon. Napoleon, Frederick the Great, Peter the Great, and Karl August have a family resemblance, in so far that no one could oppose them.” And then he adds this curious fact : “Everything that I undertook under his direction succeeded, so that in cases where I could not see my road clearly, I had only to consult him, and he instantly hit upon the way to ensure success, and I seldom knew him to fail.” He goes on to say : “If the demoniac spirit deserted him, as it often did for the time, and only the human remained, his perceptions were certainly not so clear and, strange to say, everything went wrong.”

Whether or not it was in consequence of this dual character, there is undoubted reason to believe that Karl August had extraordinary capacities for being a good ruler. He possessed all the

necessary gifts, knew how to give each one his proper place, and was conscientiously desirous to do the best he could for his people and his duchy. He kept his eyes and his ears wide open, and adopted the newest inventions and ideas. He tried to induce Jews to settle in Eisenach, in order that they might establish factories, and he started a sort of bureau, where assistance was given to young men who wished to travel. His desire undoubtedly was to do the best thing possible for his country and people; yet, like all progressive and improving rulers, he found a steady opposition to his philanthropic efforts.

“Out of thousands of people,” he writes to Knebel, “there is only a handful who desire, or who have the ambition, to go one step further than the turning point, where they stick fast.”

And it was little wonder that the incapacity and rank ingratitude of those he tried so hard to help, should have soured his naturally generous, kindly nature.

Goethe, however, found great fault with the duke's spasmodic efforts “to do right, which always ended in his doing something foolish.

God knows will he ever learn that fireworks at midday produce no effect."

Goethe's letters to Frau von Stein, to whom he told his inmost thoughts, show that, although his attachment to Karl August never weakened, yet he grew gradually impatient with his recklessness and extravagance.

"Enthusiastic as he is about what is good and right, he has, notwithstanding, less pleasure in good than in what is improper. It is wonderful how reasonable he can be, what insight he has, how much he knows; and yet when he sets about anything good he must needs begin with something foolish. Unhappily, one sees it lies deep in his nature; he resembles the frog that is made for the water, even although he has lived some time on land." But although Goethe and the duke occasionally fell out, their friendship never really waned. There was often discord between them,¹ as was natural. The duke not having yet exhausted the turbulence of youth, it was only to be expected that, as time went on, a certain coolness should enter into their relations, and although Karl August always addressed his friend with the

¹ Lewes, "Life of Goethe."

brotherly "Du," Goethe, after "the first wild weeks," recognised that it would be advisable to adopt another and less familiar address; his letters too became decidedly formal, at times unpleasantly so.

The two great failings of Karl August were his love of good wine and his admiration for pretty women. As he followed Goethe in most things, so he, too, found a second Charlotte Stein in the Countess Werther von Neunheiligen, who was to him a loving and beloved friend, and who, at all events at first, used her influence to soften the roughness and eccentricities of her friend and admirer.

It was, nevertheless, unfortunate that Countess Werther was not the sort of woman to influence a mind like that of Karl August; and moreover the intimacy began in 1779, when the duke had sown his first crop of wild oats and was settling down to more sensible pursuits. Nevertheless, Goethe, although he more than once speaks contemptuously of the countess, calling her a poor, nervous creature, confesses on one occasion that "she is very useful, and would be more so if the knots in the strand of our duke's nature

were of less complicated nature, and the strings not so hard to set going in tune." Goethe himself often found it hard to play upon this curious human instrument.

He writes on one occasion to his confidante, Frau Stein: "He has in the past given me much trouble and annoyance ; nevertheless, his naturally fine nature asserts itself, and the best comes to the front, so that he becomes a joy to live with and to work with."

These words from one who had been so intimately connected with him are undoubtedly a tribute to Karl August's character. It is beautifully expressed in the poet's well-known verses. Youth must have its day ; we all know this old saying by heart. But what of the holiday spent by the duke and Goethe at the village of Stutzenbach ? Although by no means a wild orgy, it was nevertheless unfitting for the position held by both men. They kept a diary of their doings, which Goethe had the prudence to commit to the flames ; but it leaked out through Einsiedel's garrulity that Karl August and his minister had not only danced with, but (*geliebt*) made love to or caressed the peasant girls of the village, who,

ignorant of the rank of their partners, behaved after the manner of villagers, and pulled about and played tricks upon their lovers in an altogether rough and unbefitting manner. Goethe in his daily letters to his beloved Charlotte von Stein, tells her all the incidents of this rough flirtation. "The girls," he says, "nicknamed me Mizels."¹

Dancing was the favourite amusement with the court. In the winter no less than fifteen *redoutes* (public balls) were given, besides balls and small dances at private houses. In the summer open-air dances were the fashion, on a soft carpet of moss or well-cut lawn, with the trees for the background and lights gleaming through the foliage, the band discoursing sweet music.

The duke, too, and his suite rode miles to entertainments given by the nobility, danced all night, and rode back to Weimar in the early hours of the morning. It was a joyous court,

¹ The signification of the word *misel* or *miseln* is much disputed by German writers. By some *misel* is said to mean *demoiselle* or young girl, and is related to the Dutch word *meesje*. *Miseln* signifies to take up with a girl—in other words it means *liebeln*, to make love, or flirt. Therefore the derivation from *demoiselle* may be put on one side. Goethe often makes use of the words *mizeln* and *liebeln* or *geliebelt*.

this, led by the young duke and his youthful ministers; and in many of the amusements the Duchess Anna Amalia took part.

Wieland, whose innumerable letters are one of the most trustworthy sources of information as to the doings of the gay little court, gives an account of the freedom and absence of stiffness that prevailed there. From the time Goethe became an influential member of the court circle, life was spent more than ever in the open air. Breakfast was often taken on the esplanade before the palace, in presence of a large number of the townsfolk, who stood in a circle looking on and enjoying the witticisms and somewhat broad jests with which the royal circle flavoured the morning meal. Falk relates how Bertuch often gave orders at midnight that the kitchen waggon, with all the *batterie de cuisine*, should be ready to start before dawn, in order to have the *déjeuner* ready, which the duke had invited guests to partake of in the woods. If the destination was further afield the cooks and their assistants had to spend the night in active preparations, baking, roasting, boiling, etc.

The joyous company of ladies and gentlemen

of the court set forth betimes next morning, all on pleasure bent. The still woods would resound with their gay voices. Under the shade of the trees the more romantic wandered arm in arm, enjoying the luxury of a *tête-à-tête*.

"In these moments of freedom," writes Cecilie in the Weimar Album, "a certain *laissez aller* and absence of court etiquette were permitted, ill-natured remarks being discountenanced, and each one was free to follow his or her fancy, there being no inquisitive eyes watching, or malicious tongues reporting, what they did. There were no society papers in those halcyon days, so, without fear of the pen of the scandal collector, Mademoiselle X. and Count M., or Frau von N. and Duke K. A., as the case might be, could wander together through the mazes of the wood, and if under the shelter of the umbrageous trees a lovers' kiss was interchanged, no one was indiscreet enough to hear the sound."

Goethe, in talking later on with Eckermann of his early days in Weimar, acknowledged that "the first years at Weimar were much perplexed by perpetual love affairs." Weimar, indeed, could boast of a number of beautiful and attractive

women ; women, too, who had mental gifts equal to their beauty. Corona Schröter, for instance, and Amalia Kotzebue. It was, in truth, an altogether ideal surrounding, an intoxicating period, and it was not astonishing that with "youth at the prow and pleasure at the helm," life at Weimar glided down the stream of intoxicating delight. Karl August and Goethe kept the ball rolling, and although one was a husband with a beautiful and charming wife, and the other had the important charge of the interests of the country on his shoulders, neither of these responsibilities was a feather's weight in comparison with the pleasure of the moment.

It must be acknowledged that, amidst the constant stir and excitement, the extravagance, the whispers, the innuendoes, the open scandals, and the secret sins of the little court of Weimar, we turn with a sense of relief to the picture presented by the youthful duchess. Her girlish innocence, her angelic beauty, make a pleasing contrast to the *femmes savantes* and the *beaux esprits* by whom she was surrounded. To be sure Louise was a trifle stiff, not to say starchy ; it was for all the world as if one of Holbein's Dutch respectabilities



had intruded amongst a gallery of lovely but rather unclothed beauties of Charles II.'s time. Perhaps it was a tinge of Calvinistic solemnity that kept "the angelic Louise" so far apart from Karl August. Poor young thing! she had a sorrowful and lonely life for many years. It was not altogether the duke's fault, for he was willing enough to love his wife in his own way; but, unfortunately, his fashion of loving and honouring was not precisely to Louise's liking; she had her own ideas as to the holiness of the marriage tie. Neither could she accommodate herself to the manners of the court. She had been educated in a school of strict propriety, such as then prevailed all over Germany. Without the counsels of a mother to show her how to steer her course through the intricacies of her new surroundings, and suddenly brought in contact with a gay, uncereemonious *laissez aller*, devoid of all stiffness and ceremonial, where no one appeared to take anything seriously, and where the amusement of the moment seemed to outweigh the more serious issues of life, it was impossible for her to adapt herself to such a subversion of all she had been taught to respect, and equally impossible to

attempt to reform such a chaos. She therefore took the middle and rather unwise course, of withdrawing from such amusements as seemed to her wanting in the dignity which should surround one of her exalted position, while at the same time she exacted from her personal attendants, and so far as she could from the court, the observance of that respect and distance which was, in her opinion, the cherished prerogative of those born in the purple.

Now this course of action showed that the duchess was wanting in that flexibility of character which could alone have secured her happiness in the circumstances in which she was placed ; and to a man of Karl August's frank, open character, this attitude of silent martyrdom was specially distasteful. He would have infinitely preferred a woman who would, as the saying goes, stand up to him. A passionate, even a teasing, jealous woman he would have understood. A storm, a shower of tears, then lollipops and kisses—that was his idea of a woman's grievance. But the melancholy face, the cold reserve, the absence of complaint—what on earth did it all mean? If the young duke had been passionately

in love with his Louise, probably things would have righted themselves sooner than they did. As it was, long years were to pass before husband and wife got to understand one another. The duchess's nature was so timid that she never allowed any one, least of all her husband, a glance into her inner nature, and not until they had been married many years did Karl August recognise the superior mental gifts of his wife.

"She is incomprehensible," he wrote to Knebel. "Before her marriage she lived quite alone in the world, without ever finding a human being to realise her ideal of what a friend ought to be, without exercising a single talent which would have softened her nature; she runs the risk of being completely isolated and losing all that grace and amiability which form the principal charm of her sex."

These words are a revelation; in fact they explain the situation, and enable us who read them to understand the barrier which grew up each day like an impassable wall between the young couple. Such situations occur often in novels, and we smile in a superior manner and say: "What ridiculous exaggeration! Quite improbable!

A few words would settle the matter in two minutes !” So they would, but it is the saying of the few words that makes the difficulty. It is not well to lay down hard-and-fast rules for the guidance of that most delicate piece of machinery, made by God’s own hand, the human heart, with its hopes and fears, its tender throbs, its hopeless misery, its altogether unfathomable cravings and desires. Poor Duchess Louise ! she had to fight her battle alone. There seemed to be no help, for she does not appear to have had any female friend at this period, or for some years later ; and not even the powerful bond of parental love served to draw the husband and wife nearer together. Anna Amalia, who saw with pain this unhappy state of things, endeavoured to give a helping hand to her daughter-in-law, by establishing more confidential relations between the young pair, but Louise resented any interference from her mother-in-law.

Knebel, who lets us into much that was going on, tells us the first meeting between the two princesses was not productive of very favourable results. This was probably due to coldness of manner on the part of the young duchess—an

insurmountable defect which she never was able to conquer. Anna Amalia, who was warm and expansive, was frozen by "this lump of ice"; all the more so, perhaps, because she had shown herself most anxious to secure her as a daughter-in-law. In any case, the characters of the two duchesses were essentially antagonistic. Not in one point only, but in every thought and action, they differed from one another, so that it was impossible for any very warm affection to grow up between them. This must have been a sore disappointment to Anna Amalia, who undoubtedly had worked hard to bring about the marriage.

All contemporary writers on the Court of Weimar mention this want of cordiality between the two duchesses, which had a bad influence on society generally, by encouraging gossip and tending to establish two rival camps. Still, there was no open quarrel, and the Duchess Louise had the good sense to keep on apparently good terms with her husband's mother, while Anna Amalia, who desired to be loved by her son's wife, was only too anxious to avail herself of any opening to thaw the "iceberg," and although she was deeply disappointed that the dream in which

she had indulged, of a delightful intimacy with her daughter-in-law, was not to be realised.¹

Anna Amalia, frank by nature and a decided enemy to all restraint and stiffness, may *sometimes* have erred on the side of too much frivolity. A visitor to Weimar in 1774 describes what he saw at a ball, or *redoute*, given at the City Hall. To his surprise "the duchess remained till the small hours of the morning, most of the company leaving before she did." This easily scandalised gentleman was the one who found fault with the duchess for dancing.

Henrietta von Eggloffstein, in her amusing memoirs, often alludes to the democratic spirit exhibited by the "delightful duchess," who chose her intimate friends, not for either their rank or their riches, but for their mental qualities. (In

¹ Allowance, however, must also be made for the disappointment experienced by the young duchess, who had looked for something quite different in her "mother's friend" and who, with all the intolerance of her eighteen summers, thought Anna Amalia at thirty-six an old woman, who, if she had not done with the pleasures of life, should at all events have confined herself to amusements suitable to her *advanced* years!

In their judgment of their elders we notice that the young are always inclined to sternness: nevertheless, there may have been a *shadow* of justice in this reasoning.

proof of this we have the close intimacy of thought and affection, which for years continued between her and Frau Aja.)

She did all in her power to induce a better understanding between the duchess and Karl August. She pointed out in a few sensible words to the Duchess Louise, that the course she was pursuing was one that would end by altogether estranging the duke, and that, if she wished to retain his affections, she must conform to the tastes, and study the wishes, of her husband; also that although the gaieties of Weimar might be distasteful to her, she ought not to abstain from occasionally joining in them.

The advice given by a mother-in-law is rarely taken in good part; and it does not appear that the young duchess was any exception to the general rule. "The two duchesses are angry with themselves and with one another," writes Goethe. And, naturally, this coldness between his wife and his mother annoyed Karl August, and drove him further from Louise, who seemed to him to be making an unnecessary fuss. The poor young duchess was the more to be pitied as, from her temperament, she found it hard to make friends

in her new surroundings. Everything and every one at the Court of Weimar was so different from what she had been accustomed to. Especially with the women she was not friendly.

"My wife," writes Karl August to Knebel, "lives quite alone, without a single woman friend to whom she can tell her grievances, or with whom indulge in a friendly gossip. Mesdames Stein and Herder, with all their many merits, are too homely or too frivolous for her. My wife," he goes on, "who does not possess a single talent, the exercise of which would help to pass the time, runs a great danger of growing too absorbed in self-contemplation, and of losing the quality of amiability, which is cultivated by intercourse with others."

Fortunately, the necessary female friend was found later on, when, in 1788, an English family, consisting of a father and two daughters, arrived at Weimar to spend a few months. These were the Gores, who became part and parcel of the inner court circle, and whose name is identified with the golden period of the Attic city.

"I have never known my wife," writes the duke to his friend Knebel, "take to any one as



she has done to Emily Gore, and few, here at least, have recognised her fine qualities as this Englishwoman does. This, I trust, may develope into a friendship, that will be of use to both, especially to my wife, who leads so solitary a life without a woman friend. The Gores, too, are very cultured women, and Emily Gore, especially, is full of sympathy; so that she may thaw the ice in that frozen soul. This, I know, should have been my duty, but I have never been able to devote the time necessary to develope my wife's mental qualities. Intercourse with men only is injurious to women. They lose the tender delicacy of their sex, and become in character a mixture of the two sexes, which is by no means to be desired."

That the duchess was conscious of her own shortcomings, is evident from a letter, also to Knebel, written by her in 1805.

"I have studied myself closely, and I have learned to know myself, and this knowledge forces on me the fact, that my existence is powerless to influence others."

The gifted Charlotte von Kalb seems to have had a better insight into the duchess's character.

"She was always serene and pleasant, but with her there was no *gaiety of heart*. She suffered in silence, and never allowed herself the luxury of seeking consolation in sorrow. She may have appeared indifferent, but she had a clear perception of what was going on, and her judgment was generally just. There was a general harmony about her, and she was particularly remarkable for a grave and most suitable dignity, and a total absence of exaggeration or levity. Her steadfastness of character was shown in her manner of dress, which never changed with prevailing fashion."

The unhappiness of these first years of married life was no doubt intensified by the disappointment felt in consequence of there being no prospect of an heir to the duchy. This was looked for with the more anxiety as the heir apparent, Prince Constantine, was weak in health and not a desirable successor; and this fact made the people of Weimar and Eisenach doubly anxious for the appearance of an heir in the direct line. When at last the wished-for child made its appearance, the joy was clouded by Providence sending a princess. This check to the loyalty of the good citizens of

Weimar was, however, removed in the following year, 1787, when the duchess gratified her husband and the people by giving birth to the much-desired prince.

From this time the relations between the young husband and wife entered on a much happier footing ; the querulousness which had tinged the angelic Louise's sweet nature disappeared, and as she showed Karl August more of her real nature, he grew to lean upon her judgment and to prize her love. "There was between them and throughout their lives a real and noble friendship."

One word more. Great stress is laid by some writers on the intimacy which existed between Goethe and the duke, especially in the early years of his married life, the first wild weeks at Weimar being always brought forward in proof of the poet's bad influence over the young duke. Goethe, however, quickly tired of these extravagances, while his admiration for the beauty and character of the "Angel Louise" would have led him to throw the weight of his influence over the duke in her favour.

"Louise is an angel," he had written, in the early days of the betrothal of the young duchess.

"Only the twinkling stars saw me pick up some flowers that she had worn on her breast, and put them away in my letter case, where many of the secrets of my heart are treasured."

CHAPTER VI

TO Goethe the duke's invitation to Weimar had come at a moment when the natural love of change, which is present always in youth, was accentuated by the termination of the "Lili" episode, which had plunged him into one of his tenderly melancholy moods. To this was added the strong liking, which he already had begun to entertain for the duke (a liking which was fully returned), while his admiration for the duchess's ideal beauty stirred the easily moved pulses of his heart. He was all eagerness for the visit. His mother always ready to second any plan of her beloved son, got ready his wardrobe; while *der alte* Goethe, a practised grumbler and a Radical to boot, looked askance at this friendship between his son and one of the scented and powdered aristocracy, to whom he bore an undying dislike. This dislike was accentuated by the recent fall of Voltaire from his high estate as the intimate friend of Frederick the

Great. In the end, however, the old man's opposition (which to say the truth was more grumble than reality) was got over, and, when the duke's letter of reminder arrived, all was settled. The duke had left at Strasburg one of his gentlemen-in-waiting, Herr von Kalb; he was to wait there until a landau ordered by Karl August should be finished, and then come on to Frankfurt, where he would call for Goethe and bring him to Weimar. Goethe accordingly made all his preparations, said farewell to his friends, and packed up his belongings, including his finished, half-finished, and just-begun compositions, together with his own library, etc. All this showed that he contemplated a long visit; but probably he did not intend to stay a lifetime, as proved to be the case.

The day appointed for the journey arrived; but the evening came, the night closed in, and no landau, and no von Kalb appeared. Eight, nine, ten days followed, and still no one came, no one wrote. It was a distressing position, and young Goethe repented, both that he had been so hasty in packing, and so frank in telling his movements. It is amusing to read how this great mind could not resist a feeling of youthful shame, at

being made the subject of a practical joke on the part of his friend Karl August. This was his father's view ; the elder Goethe, being a republican at heart and a rich burgher to boot, held the poor and proud nobility in the greatest contempt. He was all anxiety to get his son safely away from those fine friends, who had treated him in so scurvy a manner, and was very free with his money (a somewhat rare event), encouraging his son to travel in Italy. Goethe, however, decided that he would go to Heidelberg, where he had a pleasant time, stopping in the house of a certain Fräulein Delph, who had been a confidante of his love for Lili. This confidence did not prevent him from engaging in a warm flirtation with Fräulein Buchwitz, the daughter of one of the best families in Heidelberg. He had serious thoughts of marrying her, and entering the service of the Elector of Mannheim ; but this plan and Fräulein Buchwitz likewise were forgotten when, one evening on his return to his apartment, he saw lying on his bed a letter. It was from Frankfurt, and announced the arrival of von Kalb at last.

And now, how simple was the explanation, and



how fortunate it was that mortification had not led him into the service of the Elector of Mannheim, and an uncongenial marriage.

“The expected one had waited for the new carriage day after day, hour by hour, as we waited day after day for him; then he had gone by Mannheim to Frankfurt, and there to his horror found that I had left. He had in all haste despatched an ‘Estafette’ with his hastily written letter, and implored me to come to Frankfurt at once, and not to put him to the shame of returning to Weimar without me. My grave hostess, Fräulein Delph, now came, and, when she heard I was contemplating departure, she made a scene, which I at last put an end to by sending my servant to order a postchaise. Then she would listen to nothing I said, but did all in her power to hinder me from packing. The trunks were carried down and placed in the chaise; all was ready; the postillion cracked his whip to show he was impatient to start. I extricated myself from her grasp, but still she tried to hold on to me. I cried out in the words of Égmont: ‘Not a step further, for, see, the chariot of the sun awaits us; it holds our destiny, its wild steeds tear

at the bridle. Let us hold on like grim death, for now we swerve to the right, now to the left, rushing over stones, rocks, and precipices, tumbling, crashing, rushing on wildly. Where we go none can tell.'"¹

Poor Fräulein Buchwitz ! We can imagine the scene that took place when Fräulein Delph had to announce next morning that the handsome lover and probable husband had vanished in the night time. Well, there is nothing new in the story, and poor Buchwitz had, doubtless, to console herself with another admirer. History, however, says nothing thereof.

While the poor damsel wept, the irresponsible Goethe was speeding back to Frankfurt, and, in spite of his father, who made a great scene, he carried his point, abandoned his journey to Italy, and set off that same evening with Von Kalb in the historic landau.

The travellers arrived at Weimar on November 7th, 1775. No lodging having been provided for Goethe, he gladly accepted the hospitality offered by von Kalb's father, who held the post of President of the Chamber, and lived in the Topfel

¹ Goethe's biography.

Market. There were two pretty sisters of Kalb's, one of whom, Charlotte (afterwards of the *bas bleu* coterie), was sufficiently pretty, charming and *spirituelle* to be made love to. Goethe's reputation, however, as a lady-killer had gone before him, and Charlotte was duly warned by her brother; but it does not appear that the warning had much effect.

On the day of his arrival Wieland was invited to dinner, in order to smooth over the little difference which had arisen the previous year, 1774, in consequence of Goethe's satirical attack on him in his humorous farce, "Gods, Heroes, and Wieland."¹

¹ Writing to his friend Kestner, the young poet says (May 1774 :) "My rough joke against Wieland makes more noise than I thought. He behaves very well in the matter, so that I am placed in the wrong." The origin of the farce was a strong feeling in the circle of Goethe's friends that Wieland had misrepresented the Grecian gods and dressed them up to please a modern public. One Sunday afternoon the rage for dramatising seized upon the young Goethe, and, with a bottle of Burgundy by his side, he wrote the farce just as it stands. He sent it to one of his admiring friends at Strasburg, who said it ought to be published; and at Strasburg it was printed and given to the world. Very few would care to read it now, except as a homage to the composer; the jokes are not easy to understand, and the malice is over the heads of most twentieth century readers. Probably not many of the composer's own nationality have gone through it. But in 1774 it was otherwise. Wieland was a big man

Wieland, writing to a friend (November 8th) says :

“Goethe has arrived. How can I describe to you this *splendid* young man, or convey in a few words how my heart went out to him? I sat next to him at table, and since then I can think of nothing else. My mind is *full* of Goethe as a dewdrop is of the morning sun.” Then he goes on to say : “This wonderful creature will, I think, remain longer with us than he first intended, and if it is so decreed that Weimar is *ever* to take a first place in the world of art and literature, it will be through Goethe’s presence amongst us.”

In the evening the royalties gave what was called a *free redoute*, that is a ball at the public rooms, for which the duke paid all expenses ; and here the new arrival made his first appearance. Every one of distinction, including the duke and the two duchesses, was present, from anxiety to see the celebrated writer of *Werther*.

to attack, and the audacity of a young writer in so doing was condoned, in view of the spirit and sarcasm, which some readers considered was carried too far. Still, it was talked about and read, and, although some few were scandalised, no one considered it malicious. Wieland took no offence and reviewed it in the paper he edited (*Die Deutsche Merkur*), recommending it to all lovers of pasquinade and persiflage.

The next day he was invited to dine at the Fürstenhaus, but as he was only a burgher's son he could not dine at the royal table. A seat was provided for him at a second table. This unavoidable slight was amply made up for by the reception he met later on from all the rank and fashion of Weimar. The ladies without exception desired to be presented to him, and he was introduced by Einsiedel, the chamberlain, to a crowd of lovely women.

Wolfgang Goethe's appearance at the period when he first appeared in Weimar was very striking. Only twenty-six years of age, he was tall and elegant in figure, with a wonderfully captivating air and manner—that is, when it pleased him to make a good impression. His forehead was high, his nose long, his lips full; his brilliant black eyes—wonderful eyes they were, in which much of his beauty lay—could at times be sad, loving, irresistible, at other moments haughty, bold, delightfully humorous; or, if his anger were roused, they could dart forth lightning and annihilating glances. Added to this, he possessed a full measure of bodily strength, was skilful in all manly exercises, and brimming over with the wildest

and most youthful spirits. He was full of teasing tricks and inexhaustible nonsense, while the shafts of his ridicule and the keenness of his wit never flagged. Life had so far been for him a playground ; he knew little or nothing of its graver issues. Everything smiled on him, and, with the exception of some love episodes, such as parting from Lili and the marriage of Lotte, he had never known a sorrow.

The appearance of this remarkable and handsome youth, the cool nonchalance, bordering almost on impertinence, of his manner, together with the superior air of genius which made itself felt, took the court of Weimar altogether by surprise ; it carried them completely away. On *his* side he tells us he found himself in a strange company of people making up, as it were, a family party ; not only highly born but highly educated people, whose tastes were all for art and literature, and who loved the art and literature of their own country. He was particularly struck by the youth of the court and the complete absence of strict etiquette that prevailed elsewhere ; this freedom was due to the slackening by the Duchess Anna Amalia of those strict rules, which hedged in and regu-



GOETHE AND KARL AUGUST IN THEIR "STURMPERIODE."

After the picture by Adolf Neumann, drawn on wood.

[p. 211.]



lated the courts of Europe in the eighteenth century.

Although Goethe was at Weimar in the character of the duke's guest only, his powerful personality soon made itself felt. Almost without an effort he assumed the rôle of leader, and gave, as it were, the tone to all that was going on in the court circle; and this superiority he maintained for years.

"Like a star which for some time has been hidden behind the clouds, he shoots forth refulgent," writes Knebel. "Every one hangs on his words, especially the ladies. He has a great deal of the spirit and manner which distinguishes his books, and this makes him doubly attractive." Knebel adds: "He is dressed *à la* Werther and many follow his example."

This was only a straw that showed the way the wind blew; but it was nevertheless a flattering compliment, that all the men of fashion in Weimar should have appeared in blue coats with ¹ brass buttons, yellow waistcoats, leather breeches, and top boots—the last being an extraordinary innovation, as heretofore it had been *de rigueur*, especially

¹ (This was how Goethe's hero "Werther" was attired.)

when ladies were present, that men should wear white silk stockings and shoes, boots being only permissible in bad weather. It was true that Karl August led the way, and perhaps the only exception was Wieland, who told Goethe that he was too old for such mummeries.

The first few weeks of Goethe's visit were spent in a wild tumult of gaiety, which went on "from early dawn until midnight." There were boar hunts, skating and sleighing parties, with and without masks; suppers and dances winding up the day's enjoyment. There was much talk about all that was going on, which was only natural in a small capital where the court circle was the cynosure of all eyes. The fierce light that beats upon a throne becomes under these circumstances a kind of searchlight. Under Goethe's guidance some of the members of the young duke's court indulged in pranks that made the townspeople open their eyes with amazement. Bertuch, Goethe, and Einsiedel set the example, sometimes changing clothes with tramps and beggars and realising a good wallet full of groschen. Another of these senseless jokes was for Goethe and Karl August to stand for hours in the market-place in Jena,

cracking sledge whips for a wager. "Imagine," says Lewes, "a duke and a poet thus engaged!" In this way Goethe nearly put out one of his eyes.

Goethe, who describes himself as, up to this time, suffering from the separation from his beloved Lili, began now to feel a new emotion rising in his heart. Under its influence he writes to a female friend :

"At last I am beginning to flirt again, which is a sign of improvement. Love-making is, under such circumstances, the only palliative for suffering like mine. I tell lies and swear constancy to every pretty girl I meet, and I have the faculty of believing for the moment that every word I say is true."

It was on a visit he paid to the Steins at their country place, Kochberg, that the revival began to take place, although he could not bear the dulness of the place in which this fair creature lived. He forgot her, however, in the distraction of a delightful visit to Erfurt, the district over which Herr von Dalberg presided. With him and Wieland he spent three delightful days in the house of a certain Frau von Keller, whose daughter was the original of Wieland's Psyche.

Also, he pays devoted court to the two duchesses. The young Louise is to him "an angelic vision"; he treasures a rose that falls from her dress, and is deeply vexed that her statue-like coldness will not kindle into some warmth for that good fellow, her husband. The superior intellect of Anna Amalia he at once recognised, and her *gaieté de cœur* charms him. The boiling point is reached when the two Stolbergs, old friends of Goethe, arrive at Weimar, and the fun grows fast and furious. Being noble, they can sit at the ducal table, one on each side of the newly married duchess.

"She is an excellent woman, has the sense of an angel as well as the face of one, and in spite of her outward coldness, she has the warmest and best heart in the world." So writes Fritz von Stolberg to his sister, the Countess Bernstorff, who later on became lady-in-waiting and proved an acquisition. Stolberg adds, "*Engel Luischen* is angelic. The dowager duchess is a very pretty woman, not more than thirty-six. She is clever and dignified, her eyes full of kindness, very unlike some royal persons who wrap themselves up in a cloak of dignity. She is charming in conversation, talks

well, has a very fine wit and knows how to say a pleasant thing in the best possible manner. Prince Constantine is a very good fellow. A certain Frau von Stein, wife to the master of the horse, is a pretty little person. We are on a very pleasant footing at her house : it suits us admirably, and they seem to like us."

Here is another account in which the dowager duchess figures.

"The duke and the *Statthalter* of Erfurt,¹ an excellent fellow, with Goethe, and several of the suite, came to dine with us. When we had finished all the good things, the door suddenly was opened, and lo, and behold ! who should come in but the duchess dowager and the Frau von Stein, both looking very majestic. They carried each a sword three feet in length, which they had taken out of the armoury, and they came, if you please, to knight us all. We fell in with the joke and kept our seats with great gravity, while the two ladies went round the table laying the sword on each man's shoulder, which they did very prettily. After the table was cleared we played at blind court.² Fritz (von Stolberg) is

¹ Dalberg.

² A variation of blindman's buff.

fascinated by the deformed little Göchhausen, whose liveliness and good-heartedness animates her whole being to the tips of her fingers."

When the two young men left Weimar, the elder one carried in his pocket his appointment as gentleman-in-waiting to the duke; but, as we already know, he was not allowed to accept the post.

The sledge parties, which took place by torch-light, were a source of great gossip amongst the townsfolk, who, of course, were not allowed to share in these amusements. The Hussars (the duke's own regiment) had to stand for hours holding the torches, there being no other method of giving light. This, however, did not scandalise the public mind so much as the dances given on the ice, in which the dancers were all masked, the masks being of the most hideous description—in fact, a sort of revival of the ancient satiric masks. In addition to these revels there were the amusements in which Karl August took special delight; such as races, and hunts at breakneck speed, pig-sticking, and the mad midnight rides,¹ jumping ditches, stone walls,

¹ On one occasion the duke and his friend rode from Weimar

everything that came in the way, regardless of danger to life and limb.

"We are somewhat mad here," Goethe writes to Merck, "and play the devil's game." Wieland, although still enraptured with the splendid youth of the stranger, is obliged to acknowledge that some of his doings are outrageous. All ceremony was abolished between Goethe and Karl August. They called one another by the brotherly "Du"; each confided to the other the inmost secrets of his heart. Goethe seems to have been carried away by the novelty of the position in which he found himself. He was most to blame. Writing to Knebel, who was at Tiefurt, Goethe announces that his friends, the Stolbergs, and Karl August are "coming next day." "We shall be seven in all," he writes, "the most extraordinary party that ever sat round a dinner table. Make no fuss about us, and treat us with no ceremony."¹

There was considerable gossip about these lawless feasts, where drinking and carousing was carried beyond the ordinary limits recognised in to Leipsic in eight hours, which, considering the then condition of the roads, was an extraordinary feat of horsemanship.

¹ Prince Constantine at this time resided at Tiefurt with his tutor Von Knebel.

a lax age. At one of these feasts, given in the Fürstenhaus (under Bertuch's¹ supervision), the proceedings began by all the glasses being thrown out of the window. They were replaced by skulls which were brought from an adjacent churchyard. Fritz Stolberg, holding one of these skulls in his hand, made a pathetic funeral oration on the cranium of a true German, whose health was drunk in bumpers.

The noise made by these orgies, especially after the arrival of the Stolbergs, travelled far and near, and, no doubt, they lost nothing in enormity from the different additions made by the gossips. Klopstock, who knew the reputation of these men, thought it his duty to write to Goethe a most characteristic letter of remonstrance and good advice, in which he with an astonishing lack of *savoir faire*, introduces the name of the Duchess Louise.

"The duchess," he says, "is almost masculine in her power of self-control, therefore she will suffer in silence and hide her sorrow. But this grief will eat into her heart and will wear her down. Goethe, think of it! the *heart of Louise* is sore with grief."

¹ Bertuch was comptroller of the duke's household.

It must be acknowledged that for any one to write *unauthorised* in such language of a matter so sacred as the relations between the duke and his wife, passed the limits of ordinary interference, and we are not surprised that Goethe's answer should be cold and concise.

"Pray for the future, dear Klopstock, spare us such letters; they do no good, and are quite superfluous. What answer can I make? None. For either I must cry *peccavi* like a schoolboy, frame some sophistical excuse, or, like an honest fellow, defend myself. I might have a mixture of all three, which would go nearest to the truth, and what use would it be? Therefore, let us have no more about this matter. You may believe me that, if I were to attend to all such warnings and read all the letters of gratuitous advice sent me, I would not have a moment to myself. The duke was for a moment grieved that this one came from Klopstock, for he loves and respects you. For the rest, we hope to see Stolberg. We are not worse, and, please God, not better than when he last saw us.

"GOETHE."

In great wrath Klopstock replied :

"You are not deserving of the *great* proof I gave you of my friendship. It was great because I, unasked and most unwillingly, mixed myself up in a matter which did not personally concern me ; and since you throw away 'all such letters and refuse to listen to gratuitous advice' (I quote your own words) you have as a matter of course thrown away mine. I therefore beg to tell you that you are quite unworthy of the proof I gave you of my friendship. Stolberg shall not return to you if words of mine can prevent him, or, rather, if he listens to his own conscience."

These letters give us an idea of the reports that were circulating as to the reputation of the Court of Weimar, and enable us to realise how Goethe's character suffered in consequence.¹ Count Görtz, who was naturally jealous of the new-comer's influence over Karl August, painted him in the blackest colours, as did also his coadjutor in Erfurt, Count Dalberg, although the latter was on terms of

¹ There is very little concerning Goethe to be found in any contemporary literature or newspapers during these first years (1776-78) in Weimar. Not much dependence can be placed on newspaper reports of this period.



confidential friendship with both the duke and Goethe.

"We hear strange tales of this singular man," writes Merck to the bookseller Nicolai; "a book could be written upon all his follies and mad pranks. These have all been confided to me by his own townspeople in Frankfurt, and for three miles round they talk of nothing else. If it were all true what they say—which it is not, God be thanked!—he would long since have forfeited his rights as a citizen, but there is not an iota of truth in these tales. He is full of high spirits, but quite incapable of any wickedness."

All these evil reports got about through people writing to one another and talking to one another, —in fact, gossiping by pen and word of mouth, as we gossip now-a-days, though now not nearly so much by letter (I wish we did, and there would be a chance of good memoirs in the distant future) as over tea-cups in the afternoon.

There was a certain gentleman by name Claudius, who lived in Darmstadt. He writes to Herder, that—"there are funny reports from Weimar." I am at a loss, I confess, to discover the object of this remark, or why it should be

quoted by German writers, it is so very indefinite ; and why connect it with Goethe? Zimmermann, however, who writes from Hanover, is much clearer, and dots his i's and crosses his t's when he sends a piece of scandal. "We have here now," he says, "a certain Herr and Frau von Verlepsch ; the last-named is full of gossip about Weimar. If all is true that she relates, it is enough to make one's hair stand on end." He then goes on to communicate some particulars which have come to him through a lady, Goethe's *most intimate friend*. We can easily guess that this friend was Frau von Stein, wife to Herr von Stein, who was Karl August's gentleman-in-waiting. This lady, years before, had excited in Zimmermann a tender interest, of the same platonic character as her later friendship with Goethe. I cannot think Frau von Stein acted loyally in writing as she did to her old admirer of her new friend, but one has only to look at her face and see what sort of woman she was. Her letter, however, although interesting as a pen portrait, is not very reliable.

"Goethe," she says, "has caused a social earthquake here. It will require all his genius

to restore the chaos to order. It is quite certain that he has excellent intentions, but he is too young and too inexperienced to manage such an imbroglio. However, we must wait for the end. Meantime all our happiness here has disappeared ; our court is no longer what it was—a ruler discontented with himself and with all the world, every day imperilling his life, having only a minimum of bodily strength to rely on, a brother still more weakened, a disappointed mother, a discontented wife—a *tout ensemble* of excellent people who do not suit one another, and are therefore an unhappy family.”

Zimmermann considers that his fair correspondent takes rather too lenient a view of the situation, her leniency being prompted by her partiality for the chief offender. He knows that the Duchess Louise complains bitterly to her sister at Karlsruhe of the neglect of Karl August ; still the doctor himself takes a lenient view of Goethe, who perhaps deserves “praise instead of curses,” and in any case genius like his is not to be trammelled by the law that governs inferior mortals.

This letter of Zimmermann’s has a certain

importance, as it strikes the keynote of the whole situation. Jealousy, that most common of all vices, was at work in poor Louise's heart. When she wrote her complaints to Karlsruhe one would sympathise to a certain extent with the young wife, but for the fact that we know how Goethe admired "the angel Louise." Later on she found this out and recognised that she had no warmer friend. But the baser form of jealousy, that which does not spring from wounded affection, but from an envious nature which grudges that those who merit success should receive their proper reward, now took possession of the hearts of nobles and courtiers. They had seized every opportunity to make much of the handsome, witty, clever guest of the duke, in order to curry favour with Karl August by so doing. They supposed that the stranger was only a bird of passage, who could not interfere with their plans and projects.

But later the courtiers began to look with distrust and jealousy on the close friendship between the new-comer and the duke. There was no talk of his visit coming to a close. Their spirits were somewhat cheered when Goethe,

whose poetic temperament was beginning to weary of the constant scenes of dissipation, "the masking, skating, hunting, drinking and dicing," grew impatient for the serenity of solitude; he felt a longing to escape from the *hot air* of society, and to enjoy the company of simple country folk, so he went on a solitary excursion to Waldeck. He was speedily recalled by the duke, who found life dull without the companionship of his new friend.

His return was not welcome to his enemies, who were hoping that some fortuitous circumstance would put an end to the new friendship; but in this they were doomed to disappointment. His absence had made Karl August only eager to secure the constant presence of his friend. Soon it was observed that a change had taken place in both young men; there was no more of the unbridled orgies of the first wild weeks. Goethe had drained the cup of pleasure to the lees, and now his magnificent intellect craved for a wider sphere. He would be a ruler of men.

But here it must be owned we are, in reading his biographies, confronted with a strange fact, for which no explanation at all satisfactory can

be offered. What was the powerful charm that attracted and, as it were, bound Goethe in a life-long embrace to this insignificant little town, situated in the far-away Thuringian mountains? He, who could have made a figure in the great theatre of the world, to be content with so narrow a circle! It was not altogether his newly born friendship for Karl August (although this was a genuine sentiment on his part), neither was it any newly awakened interest in Weimar itself, nor any tender feeling towards a woman (that was to come later). It was, in the first place, the power, which was a remarkable feature of Goethe's character, of conquering all obstacles that might present themselves under new circumstances, and having once mastered the situation, he found it impossible to detach himself again from the spot where he had, as it were, taken root, and in a short time he became part and parcel of the place. Perhaps the best explanation of the problem is to be found in Goethe's own words: "My situation here is advantageous enough, and the Duchy of Weimar and Eisenach is a stage upon which I can experiment as to my capacity for playing my part on a larger platform." That he never

sought that larger platform, but lived and died in Weimar, is a matter of history.

It seems, on looking at the subject from different points of view, that Goethe was by no means unprepared for the position offered to him by Karl August. So far back as the meeting at Mainz, offers had been made to him, and the journey to Weimar was not only to make a friendly visit, but also to reconnoitre the "*terrain*." The duke, who every day grew more attached to his new friend, pressed him constantly to accept some post in the administration ; and so early as 1776 Goethe wrote to his friends at Frankfurt : "You will soon hear that I have begun to make a figure on the *theatrum mundi*." He was, in fact, a member of Karl August's Privy Council (Geheimerath) long before he received the title, Wieland tells us, adding,—“Goethe will never get away from here ; Karl August can neither swim nor wade without his help.”

We must now return to Goethe and the political crisis. Much as the young politician was tempted by ambition and pressed by his royal friend, he would not bind himself to any decided action before he had thoroughly learned the work that

lay before him. Hence came the apparently sudden fit of devotion to work, which showed itself by constant presence at the council meetings, no one understanding what brought him there. If one could have looked into his mind, one would have seen that he was trying with all the strength of his will to find some way in which to reconcile his acceptance of office as royal adviser with that freedom of opinion which he held to be every true man's, and especially every poet's, birthright.

“Freedom of opinion and a competency are to be the first conditions of the new arrangements,” he explains to Merck ; a fact that is proved by the agreement between the duke and the young Goethe, which von Kalb brought to Frankfurt for the approval of the parents, for it was necessary, by the laws of Germany, that their written consent should be obtained. The declaration or proposal made by Karl August contains some remarkable passages, if we take into account that the writer was only nineteen years of age.

“When a man of such genius as Goethe diverts his extraordinary talents into a different and unaccustomed channel, he is not misusing his

great gifts, and as to the fallacy put forward that, through his entering public life deserving statesmen were thrust aside and contemned, I deny this emphatically. My resolve was taken on the day I succeeded to the position I hold, that I should never bestow the post of ministerial adviser—a post which brings the holder thereof into such close contact with myself, and which is so intimately connected for good or evil with the interests of the people—upon any but a person in whom I could place absolute confidence, and this confidence I feel I can bestow on Dr. Goethe.”

That this declaration, or protocol, which goes into close details unnecessary to reproduce, was the unassisted product of the young duke’s mind, is hard to credit, and there are turns of expression which would be to some undoubted evidence of the influence of an older and more able man.

Moreover, there is ample evidence in the letters and papers in the Goethe *archiv* to prove that, from the first day when Knebel introduced the two princes to Goethe, the personality of the great German writer took hold of Karl August, who was attracted, not so much by the appear-

ance of this "splendid young man" as by his wonderful mental powers, which, as it were, dominated and electrified the young duke.

The influence once gained lasted (with slight checks now and again) the lifetime of the duke. On his side Goethe must be credited with sincerity of purpose. His influence in no way resembled that possessed over King Louis of Bavaria by Wagner, whose aim, at least in the beginning, was to secure for himself the light and luxury for which he craved. Goethe's influence was elevating, not deteriorating. We know from his writings that in the very early days of Goethe's visit to Weimar, in the midst of a whirlpool of amusements, the two friends, duke and poet, whose united ages did not amount to forty-seven years, had long and earnest conversations on the subjects of administration and practical government, and plans, which later came to fruition, were sketched for the advancement of science and the amelioration of the poorer classes.

Goethe often expressed to his intimate friends his joy that the duke held the same opinions on many subjects as he did. He was full of hope that, later on, he could mould the mind of his

friend, and bring him to see the evils that abounded in every part of the administration ; he cherished the hope that Karl August would prove an ideal ruler, that Weimar, emancipated from the burdens laid upon it by bad laws and weak government, would become a typical example of peace and prosperity.

There can be little doubt that something of the changes about to be made had filtered out through different channels and had filled the minds of those already in office with dismay, while the general feeling was one of indignation that a burgher's son from Frankfurt should push his way into the select circle reserved for the ancient nobility of Thuringia.

Knowing the value set upon titles by these aristocrats, Karl August conferred the dignity of the ennobling "Von" on his friend, an honour which cannot have been greatly prized by the son of a staunch republican, who was himself before all things democratic. It was Anna Amalia who induced the young poet to accept the honour, which failed to make "*a Goethe*" acceptable to a "*contemptible and brainless nobility*." The brainless nobility, however, were right in scenting danger,

the conferring of the title being only the prelude to fresh honours for the plebeian Frankfurter.

Soon came the announcement that Dr. Von Goethe had been made Geheimerath, or Minister, with a seat in the Privy Council and a salary of one thousand two hundred thalers yearly. "This stranger, a poet by profession, twenty-six years of age, who drew the duke into all manner of dissipation and who danced at fairs with the village girls! Shameful! Intolerable! Scandalous!" shrieked the hysterical courtiers. Even Minister von Fritsch lost his sedate dignity, and for once forgot himself so far as to show his inner feelings of jealousy and discontent.

In an angry letter to Anna Amalia he pours out his indignation: "Are old men who have served the country well and given their best abilities to Your Royal Highness, to walk after this Tasso Goethe?"

It was in answer to this that Karl August wrote his well-known and most generous defence of his friend, "in whose honour and honesty he had unalterable and everlasting faith."

On this Fritsch wrote to the duke tendering his resignation.

"The man who enjoys the honourable and distinguished position of Minister must naturally be in constant communication with your person, and in evidence at your court. How could I fill such a post; I who possess no courtier-like polish, whose manners are rough and tinged with a gravity that makes me appear unbending and deficient in those graces which are necessary for a courtier? I cannot help thinking that both my character and my increasing years render me quite unfit to occupy my present office about your highness, and I beg you to receive my resignation."

Karl August showed the minister's letter to his mother, and asked her to soothe Minister von Fritsch's little fit of temper. Amalia, therefore, wrote a letter well calculated to throw oil on the troubled waters :

"Is it possible that you would desert my son at the moment when he has most need of you? And are your reasons for so doing worthy of you? I think not. You are prejudiced against Goethe, whom you know only through false and mischievous reports. You understand well how my every thought is centred upon my son, and how it has always been my strongest desire, and still continues to be

my one ambition, that he should have about him men capable of teaching him how to govern the country and people committed to his care. If I believed that Goethe, instead of possessing such qualities, was one of those crawling creatures who only think of their own advantage, I should be the first to use my influence against him. I will say nothing to you of his talents, of his genius ; but, apart from them, the opinions he holds should teach him to do his best to make others happy. But let us talk no more of Goethe, but of you, and let me tell you that *your religion* and *your conscience* alike forbid you to desert your prince. Look for a moment into yourself. I am, sure, indeed I know, that you are grateful. I beseech you to show your gratitude now and also your affection for me by not deserting my son at this moment, and under these circumstances I ask you to do this as much for your own sake as for that of my son.

“ I am, with the sincerest regard,

“ Your sincere friend,

“ AMALIA.”

Who could read such a letter as this and

remain deaf to such sweet womanly words? Fritsch continued to act the part of a faithful friend and adviser to Karl August for twenty-four years. It is somewhat surprising (and decidedly unusual) to find that Fritsch, who had been in the ministry since Karl August's birth, should have settled down comfortably with "Tasso Goethe," and is a distinct proof of the cleverness with which Goethe managed to steer clear of the different shoals that beset a man raised suddenly to so high a position. The Goethe *archiv* possesses a portfolio containing the correspondence between Goethe and Fritsch which extends over many years, and is of the most friendly character.

Karl August showed his gratitude to his old friend and minister, by giving him a grant of fifteen hundred thalers; in this manner the danger of a split in the cabinet was dexterously averted. There still remained Count Görtz, the duke's former governor, whose influence, as we know, had been supreme. Of late, however, a change had come over Karl August, who no longer saw through Görtz's spectacles. As was only natural, the former governor was loath to lose his power.

Goethe's influence was much too strong for Görtz to contend with, and soon we hear of his tendering his resignation, and withdrawing from the court into private life. Later he took office under Prussia.

The famous French politician, Talleyrand, when in any perplexity, quoted the well-known proverb *Cherchez la femme* and acting on this we shall now seek the woman whose hand helped to steer the course of Goethe's future life. No one can say it was a bad course ; it led to much intellectual progress ; it made Weimar the centre of all that was most distinguished in art and literature ; it brought to perfection the gifts of men like Herder, Wieland, Schiller, besides others of less mark. And yet all this was brought about by the influence of one woman—by no means a woman of intellectual power, but a woman well adapted to charm and fascinate such a nature as Goethe's.

This woman was Charlotte von Stein. It was undoubtedly her influence which made of the great poet a truly great man. He ceased his habit of flirting, now with one now with another, and rested peacefully (at least for a few years), content with his love for Charlotte although she was considerably his senior. Sometimes,

during the first months of their intimacy, his letters were of the warmest ; but the lady understood how to administer a douche of cold water, if her lover went too far. He wrote to her daily, sometimes twice a day, and when away, invariably sent an *estafette* with his daily letter. Truly his constancy was admirable. Still, it must be remembered that there was a husband.

The Master of the Horse,¹ however, was well acquainted with the character of his Charlotte, and never for a moment had any fear lest she should be carried away by a gust of passion, to forget that she was his wife, and the mother of his son, who was ten years old when Goethe became a friend of the family. For many years Fritz was to him like his own son, and lived altogether with him. A recent writer, commenting on this curious episode, says that this love-story, as it existed between the years 1776 to 1786, is almost a poetic idyll.

Charlotte Ernestine von Schardt, was born in December 1742. As the daughter of Schardt, the then master of the ceremonies, she had

¹ Stein united the two offices of Master of the Horse, and Gentleman-in-Waiting. He afterwards resigned the latter office.

grown up in the court circle, at that time presided over by the beautiful Charlotte of Bayreuth, who had married the eccentric, half-crazy Duke of Saxe-Weimar. Even in her childhood Charlotte Schardt was sentimentally inclined, and we are told preferred "gazing at the stars to playing with her doll." As she grew up she developed a strain of romanticism—a feature of the age, which was cultivated as a sort of religion by some high-strung romanticists. Her education tended likewise in the direction of sentimentalism, so did her whole air and manner. Beautiful she was not, in the strict sense of the word, but her sad eyes, large and lustrous, looked out on the world with the appealing expression of one who sought rest somewhere, but could not find her heart's desire. Her whole air was that of one ever seeking and always misunderstood. Like the other members of her family, as soon as she was of proper age, a place was found for her at the court.

Charlotte, who was one of many sisters, most of whom had found husbands in the court circle, was early trained to the duties of lady-in-waiting. She could read aloud, play the harpsichord, sing

in a tender voice sad music, which suited her sad eyes, and she understood well how to flatter and how to flirt. In an incredibly short space of time she attracted one of the best *partis* of the court circle, namely, Gottlieb Ernst Josias Friedrich von Stein, who was sprung from a noble house. As in those days girls had little chance of marrying the lover of their choice, Charlotte, without murmuring, agreed to accept the first suitor that came in her way, and was married off-hand to a man for whom she not only felt no love, but later grew to dislike. Seven children were born to her, of whom several died, and her health suffering in consequence, she went to the baths of Pyrmont, where she met Zimmermann, who for a short period occupied the position later filled by Goethe. In fact, it was this first platonic friend who directed her attention to the rising genius, by advising her to read *Götz von Berlichingen*. She corresponded for years with Zimmermann, and expressed to him her admiration for Werther and his sorrows. Her husband, when he visited Frankfurt with Count Görtz, made the young poet's acquaintance, but previous to this we find Zimmermann writing to his dear fragile friend :

"Wherever I have been lately (and I have visited amongst other places, Frankfurt and Geneva), I have taken the opportunity to mention your name."

This rather curious method of puffing was evidently done at the fair Stein's suggestion, or, at all events, it was pleasing to her to be so advertised. But the *friend* goes further.

"At Strasburg I met Goethe (who was returning from Switzerland, where he had been travelling with the Stolbergs), and showed him amidst a hundred other silhouettes, the one you sent me of yourself. He wrote underneath: 'It would be a wonderful spectacle to watch how the world is mirrored in this soul, which can only form its judgments through the medium of love, for its only guide is tenderness.'" (This was a very bad shot, for of all the cold-blooded flirts this Charlotte was one.) "Never," continues friend Zimmermann, "was there a better piece of character reading from a silhouette, and you, gracious lady, must acknowledge the truth of the words. I stopped during my stay at Frankfurt with the old Goethe. The son is one of the most extraordinary and the most gifted of

geniuses that have been produced here below. He tells me that he will without doubt visit Weimar. And you will bear in mind that all I told him at Strasburg about you kept him awake three whole nights ! ”

These hundred silhouettes were intended for Lavater's great work on physiognomy ; also to demonstrate how far the features of the face corresponded with the character. Goethe wrote for Lavater under the silhouette of Charlotte von Stein : “ Firmness, courteous persistence in one course, amiable, agreeable, submissive ; naïve, very self-complacent, and fond of talking of herself ; benevolent and true-hearted ; conquers generally by tears.”

We are at liberty to draw our own conclusions as to how much Zimmermann's revelations of what he knew of the fair Stein's character had to do with Goethe's wonderful skill in physiognomy.

It was only natural that all this talk induced Charlotte's attention to fix itself upon the young reader of her character. She had accompanied the Duchess Amalia, when she went to Ilmenau to meet the two princes on their return from their tour, and she heard the account they had

given of the young poet, of whom they and Knebel never ceased talking. Also the Duchess Louise, who had made Goethe's acquaintance, spoke to her dear Charlotte of this wonderful young man, whose tender regard for herself she had (with a woman's quick perception) doubtless noticed. She may have felt the interest even a good wife sometimes cannot help feeling towards one who has to fight against an unfortunate attachment to herself. And so it was that before Wolfgang came to Weimar these two women were interested in him, talked of him to one another, and looked forward to his arrival.

During the first years of this strange friendship Goethe went to Charlotte every day, and some of his letters are burning with love, others exceedingly prosaic. Here is a slight selection taken at haphazard: "Good morning. Here is asparagus. How were you yesterday? Philip baked me a cake, and thereupon wrapped up in my blue cloak, I laid myself upon a dry corner of the terrace and slept amid thunder, lightning, and rain, so gloriously that my bed was afterwards quite disagreeable." Again he writes: "Thanks for the breakfast. I send

you something in return. Last night I slept on the terrace wrapped in my blue cloak, awoke three times at twelve, two, and four, and each time there was a new splendour in the heavens."

Of course there are others of a much warmer character—and occasionally there are explosions of jealousy, for Frau von Stein had a choice of admirers. Von Knebel, who in later years seems to have burned his elderly wings fluttering round the lady, describes her as a sweet excellent woman, for whom nature supplies the want of passion which she does not comprehend. And again he finds in conversations with Frau von Stein the greatest *nourishment* (a curious expression). He assures his sister the dear woman is "absolutely *free* from any kind of coquetry, is well educated, and has a decided knowledge of art," from which we may assume with certainty that she had admired his, Knebel's, feeble water colours.

There can be no doubt, however, of the strict propriety of her conduct, and through it she kept her hold on her admirers' affections for many years.

The daily correspondence between Charlotte and

her admirer is one of the most extraordinary on record, and has its counterpart in Merimée's letters to his unknown fair one.

Charlotte von Stein will live in story so long as the great genius of Goethe continues to fascinate those who study his wonderful masterpieces. The singular charm exerted by this woman, who possessed neither the attractions of youth nor of extraordinary beauty, and whose intelligence was but second-rate, must, however, remain a mystery. "Frau von Stein wearies me with her talk of what she knows nothing about," says Anna Amalia, and from what contemporary writers tell there seems to have been good ground for the complaint. Goethe himself found it hard to explain the power this woman eight years his senior exercised over him.

"I can only explain," he writes to Wieland, "the power she exercises over me, by the theory of the transmigration of souls. Yes, we were, we must have been, formerly man and wife. Now, I can find no name for us."

The curious comments of Charlotte's son, Frederick von Stein, form one of the strangest features of this remarkable history. The correspondence, he

remarks, between his mother and Goethe, while it proves that emotions, even dangerous in their warmth, were not far distant from their intercourse, also serves to place in a still stronger light the virtue and prudence of a woman who, while keeping her young, gifted and ardent lover within the limits of *strict reserve*, contrived to console him in all his trials, both mental and material, by her sincere sympathy as well as by her soothing protestations of sincere and lasting friendship. German writers speak with enthusiasm of this tender, poetical love idyll, which lasted in its first fervour for ten long years. It received its first blow when Goethe went on his visit to Italy, the correspondence dwindling to letters once a week. When he married Christiane Vulpius, the tender idyllic Charlotte let the mask drop, and abused him like a fishwife.

The house where Charlotte von Stein lived practically alone (for her son tells us that his father came only once a week to visit his family) is a large stone-fronted mansion—such as house-agents love to describe by the term “residential.” It now makes one of four or five handsome houses, but in the days when Charlotte lived there

it stood alone in a large garden with magnificent trees, which formed a sort of curtain between Charlotte and Wolfgang, whose little house in the park was within twenty minutes' walk.

The great beauty of Weimar was, and still is, its lovely park, than which there can be nothing in nature more beautiful. Once seen it can never be forgotten, for it recalls hours and even days of exquisite enjoyment. Any one who has wandered through its sunny walks and winding shades, watching its changing beauties, from the fulness of summer to the lovely tints of autumn, then deepening again into winter, will easily understand how Goethe could have been content to live in so small a city which had, beside its *nest* of friends, so charming a park. It was, indeed, mainly his own creation, and filled a large space in his life. The walks in the park are so numerous that it is difficult to make a choice, but I own to a predilection for the pleasant stroll which begins by crossing the bridge over the Stern which leads away from the palace. Here we have some magnificent trees, splendid giants which look upon us miserable pigmies with the silent contempt of their long experience. We walk humbly under





THE BARK HOUSE IN THE PARK.

their protection from the burning sun till we come to Goethe's Garden-house, where he lived for seven years.

A little further on, in one of the loveliest spots, "made picturesque" by the grouping of the trees, chief among which is the brilliant mountain ash "with berries red as coral hanging in clusters," stands the Borkenhaus (Bark House), which was erected by Goethe for a *fête* of the duchess, and which later was often occupied by the duke, who was attracted by the situation of this retreat, resting as it does against a moss-covered rock. Its solitude engenders the dreamy sensation of past and present mingling together, a feeling which is here intensified by the flowing waters of the Ilm, as they run their lazy and rather useless course close by.

The park was the scene of many of those open-air *fêtes* organised by Goethe for the gratification of his patron and friend, Karl August, and also as a homage to the Duchess Louise, for whom he had an enthusiastic and chivalrous admiration. The Luisen-Klause or (Louise's Hermitage), which later went by the name of the Borkenhaus, was a tribute to the lady of his devotion. Goethe

wished to honour the duchess's birthday, on August 25th, 1778, by an open-air *fête* in the park, in which a dramatic representation was to be included; some nights before a great storm arose, in consequence of which the Ilm overflowed its banks and destroyed all chance of an open-air performance.

Nothing daunted, Goethe, without saying a word of his purpose, set to work, and put workmen to hollow out a portion of the overhanging crag. Three days and nights were occupied in this task, which escaped the notice of the tattling Weimarites; and, lo and behold! there suddenly appeared as if by enchantment a charming moss-covered cottage with two windows and a little charming wooden balcony, with a stone staircase leading up to it. Here the duchess and all the court were received by Goethe as Pater Decorator, surrounded by a body of monks. The guests were then conducted into the first room, "where saucers of *kalzbeer*" were offered to them, which they drank with iron spoons. Suddenly music was heard; a door at the back flew open and disclosed a splendid banquet.

Goethe delighted in these festivals, which were



IN THE PARK. BRIDGE LEADING TO THE BORKENHAUS.



much to the taste of the duke and duchess. Duke Karl was very partial to the little Borkenhaus, which was soon made into a cosy nook. A shady row of trees concealed it from general observation. By means of a bell the cottage was brought into communication with the arsenal, where troops were quartered ; and when this was done a bedroom was added for the use of Karl August.

At the Borkenhaus the duke often received his ministers, and here he spent many pleasant hours with Goethe and other intimate friends. From the roof of the Borkenhaus Goethe's tiny hut or cottage was visible. To this tiny dwelling-house the poet, when he first came to Weimar, took an extraordinary fancy. It was not the dwelling itself, so much as the lovely but neglected garden, which was to the poetic mind of the young man a joy for ever. He must possess it or die. The only obstacle in the way was that it already belonged to Bertuch, who had been for years keeper of the duke's privy purse. To Bertuch Karl August said : " I must have your garden ; I cannot help it, for Goethe wants to have it ; he says he cannot live without it." Bertuch, in true courtier fashion made no protest, and in return for his

complaisance received some land elsewhere. This story, however, which has been repeated in a dozen biographies, is contradicted by a recent writer, and the contradiction is supported by an entry in Bertuch's account book: "1,294 thaler 16 groschen for the purchase of the garden, bought for the hon^{ble} Minister of Legations, Herr von Goethe."¹

The situation of Goethe's that was simply perfect. The town, although so close, was completely shut out from view by the thick growing trees—it was a perfect solitude, and yet there were now and again tokens that the giddy world was close at hand. The church bells ringing out, or the music from the barracks, or the screaming of the peacocks in the park.

The joy of his life Goethe calls his little garden. He cultivated it himself with the help of Philip, his man-servant. Entries in his diary, which it would take too long to quote here, are full of his joy and content with the duke's present.

Goethe lived in this house for seven years. He loved its solitude, and when he wished the luxury of being undisturbed, he locked "all the gates of

¹ Lewes in his biography does not seem aware of this; he says it was a formal gift to Goethe in 1780.



THE MONUMENT TO GENIUS IN THE PARK.



THE SCHILLER-BANK IN THE PARK.

the lodges which led from the town so that," Wieland complains, "no one can get at him except by the aid of picklocks and crowbars." Here the duke came often, sitting up till late in the night in earnest discussion, often sleeping on the sofa instead of going home. Here both duke and duchess would come to dine in the most simple, unpretending way, the whole banquet on one occasion consisting, as we learn from a casual expression in the Stein correspondence, of some cold meat and soup.

He often had visits from Anna Amalia and the Frau von Stein. The latter took great interest apparently in the study of botany; she, however, never came unattended. Either her husband was of the party or her children, or sometimes her brother, and her two friends the Ilten.

Anna Amalia, when she visited Goethe's garden, sometimes remained the whole afternoon. "The Duchess Amalia and the prince were in excellent humour," writes Goethe in his diary, "and I offered so much hospitality that, when they were all gone, I was glad to eat a bit of cold meat and to talk with Philip about his world and my world. And now I am tired and shall go to bed, and

I hope to sleep till I awake refreshed. Good-night. It is near eleven o'clock. I have drawn the plan of an English garden. It is a grand sensation to be alone with nature;¹ to-morrow morning it will be lovely."

In 1794 Karl August, after his return from his tour in Italy, erected a more ambitious residence in the park. This was the Römische Haus (Roman Villa), which was begun in 1794 and finished 1799. It was called by the people of Weimar "the house over the cold kitchen." In structure it is in a semi-Italian style of architecture, and is ornamented by many statues, copies from those in the Roman palaces.

Karl August was buried here by his own desire.

¹ For some time he was in the habit of sending Philip back to Weimar, and staying alone in the Garden House.



TEMPEL HERREN HAUS IN THE PARK. BUILT BY KARL AUGUST.

[p. 352.]

CHAPTER VII

ANNA AMALIA'S interference in the affair of Fritsch's retirement was her last political act. From the time that Goethe became minister, Karl August turned altogether to him for advice. The duchess, who had the highest opinion of Goethe's capacity for administration, was well pleased to see her son in such safe hands, and with great wisdom abstained from all interference. For the rest, she had long desired to be freed from state affairs, and to have leisure for the intellectual and artistic pursuits which were more to her taste than politics or public business, which latter she had undertaken in the interest of her son. Already, when in the flower of her youth, she had shown a marked taste for retirement, in order to devote herself to the study of the great lessons which nature teaches to those who are willing to learn. And now that she was free from the trammels of government, she arranged a plan of life which, although it was not that of a recluse, gave her

ample time to gratify her love of art and to drink deeper of the great well of knowledge ; for Amalia had a large mind, ready to embrace all subjects which had to do with nature in its very widest sense. Nor was her life by any means retired or solitary.

A woman of her energetic disposition, and gifted as she was with social qualities of a high order, and a capacity for enjoying life to the fullest extent, was not likely to hide her light under a bushel. On the contrary, she collected round her a circle of men and women whose names are a sufficient indication of their claim to a high place in literature and art, and of this gifted circle she was the moving spirit. No one knew better than Anna Amalia how to hold this wonderful collection of savants and wits together, and how to make each one contribute his or her part in a constant and delightful interchange of social gifts. The only circle which could approach to the Weimar *coterie* was the gathering of men and women, remarkable in their different capacities, which assembled at Luxemburg in the early part of the last century, under the guidance of the gifted Sophie Charlotte of Prussia.

It will be remembered that, at the time the Residenz Schloss was consumed by fire, Minister von Fritsch offered his newly built mansion¹ which stood at the corner of the Esplanade, to his royal mistress as a dower house. This offer Anna Amalia accepted, and until her death occupied the "Casa Santa," which was the name given by Wieland to the *Witthumshaus*. It is a commodious and handsome residence ; there is a broad staircase and a wide corridor, which leads to the principal sitting-rooms, and a spacious reception salon, on the walls of which hang the portraits of the members of the royal families of Brunswick and of Berlin. This apartment opens into the red sitting-room, which takes its name from the colour of the rich damask hangings and furniture. Here the duchess held her symposium—or rather one should say her round table—not of strong Arthurian knights, but of highly intellectual men

¹ The *Witthumshaus* was originally built in 1767 by Minister von Fritsch, on the occasion of his marriage, for his own occupation. By the order of the late Grand Duke, everything has been left exactly as it was on the day of Amalia's decease : a volume of music remains open at the place where she had last made use of it : so too with the book she was reading and the piece of embroidery she was engaged upon.

and women. This circle generally assembled on a Friday evening.

The importance of the social influence exercised by the personality of Anna Amalia must not be forgotten, when we consider the wonderful galaxy of distinguished men and women who were drawn to Weimar, and gave to the little duchy the name of the Modern Athens. We have seen how, during the childhood and boyhood of her children, Anna Amalia directed all the energies of her mind to the task of fulfilling her duty as regent and mother, and how she surrounded her sons with men of superior intellect, Wieland, as we know, being one of the first arrivals. When his task of education was finished, it was again Anna Amalia who settled upon him a pension of one thousand thalers, on condition that he should make Weimar his home, it being specially agreeable to the duchess to have a man of his intellect near her, ready to help her with her studies, and she extended to him the friendliest and, in a measure, patronising kindness.

That the duchess had a somewhat uncertain, and occasionally violent, temper is made evident

by a curious letter, to be found in Wieland's correspondence with Merck. It was written during the first month of Merck's early acquaintance with Anna Amalia. The beginning is missing, and therefore we are left ignorant of the reason why it was written, whether it was a friendly warning or an outburst of one of Wieland's occasional fits of bilious jealousy, or perhaps an answer to some enquiries made by Merck, in consequence of something which had happened either to offend him or put him on his guard.

The letter, is dated Weimar, August 1778.

"You know as well as I do that at times the darkest shadows surround the brightest constellations, and this fact makes it more difficult for me to analyse a character which is Rembrandt-like in its lights and shadows. Basta! you are aware, or should be aware by this time, that no one—yourself not excepted—loves this dear woman better than I do: therefore I will ask you to make allowance for the faults and human failings of the persons who surround the duchess. I have often been driven *nearly* mad by all that goes on, but there are moments when no human being could keep their senses in such a perpetual up and down

of ill-humour, impatience, uncertainty, and pettiness, which is enough to destroy any character. I know well what I had to endure in the years '73 to '75. Meanwhile every word we both have said of the dear woman is true. You have noted as well as I the Rembrandt and Guido-like shades that come across the blue firmament; but the longer I exist, the more I am filled with respect even for the black patches, which at one time disfigured to my short vision the always pleasing tableau presented by such a life, and the longer I live the more I am convinced that, *telle qu'elle est*, she is one of the most delightful and splendid mixtures of human, womanly and royal qualities that has been on this earth of ours."

On another occasion he writes :

"The duchess expects a letter from you, and I shall say no more except that, if you will pen a few lines that will only take ten minutes or so to write, you will not only please the duchess but do a kindness to those who have to live with her, who will have a better time. The moral which I wish to draw is pretty plain."

It is evident from these remarks that Merck had been subjected to a little touch of the duchess's

temper inherited from Grandpapa William of Prussia. Anna Amalia was no angel, as her flatterers would have us believe ; she was a woman, with a woman's faults, sharp in temper, sometimes hysterical, often unjust, but always lovable, always true to her friends with a fidelity beyond praise, and in most cases she met with faithful service.

Wieland was, however, very spasmodic in his friendships. He was of an amiable, loving nature, attaching himself to those who showed him kindness, but growing jealous and angry if they exhibited a preference for any other friend. Writing to Merck, for whom he had a warm regard, he says :

“If it should come to pass that I am no longer capable of forming fresh attachments, I should still preserve my love for Goethe and for you, and I trust in God that my heart will never grow cold or incapable of loving you both.”

These words were written in the year 1775, soon after Goethe had come to Weimar, and two years later his affection for Goethe seems unchanged, for to the same correspondent he writes :

“Lately I have spent two delightful days in Goethe's company. He and I have had to make

up our minds to be painted by Rath May for the good pleasure of the Duchess of Würtemberg. Goethe sat in the forenoon and afternoon and begged me, as 'Serenissimus' was absent, to bear him company, and, for the improvement of his mind and mine, to read him something out of 'Oberon.' Luckily, it so chanced that this generally excitable individual happened to be on this occasion in his most receptive humour, and was as easily amused as a girl of sixteen. Never, in all the days of my life, have I seen any one so pleased with another man's work as he was with 'Oberon' all through, but especially with the five songs wherein Hyon acquits himself verbatim of the emperor's commission. It was a real *jouissance* for me, as you can well imagine, especially as a few days later he confessed that not perhaps for three years would he be again in the same condition of receptivity or openness of mind for an *opus hujus furfuris et farinæ*."

In considering the circle of great men who were drawn to Weimar, principally by the presence there of Goethe, one cannot fail to notice the tact and generosity displayed by the poet towards those who, he thought, were battling against evil fortune.

The case of Herder is specially noticeable. Goethe had met, as the reader may remember, at Darmstadt a number of the Sentimentalists, amongst them the pretty and fascinating Caroline Flachsland, then engaged to Herder, whose wife she shortly after became. Herder was already known to Goethe by reputation—these two causes moved the generous mind of the more prosperous minister to extend a helping hand to the less fortunate Herder, and an invitation to come as Court Chaplain to Weimar was despatched to him at Buckeberg. It should not have lessened Herder's feelings of gratitude that his timely offer came from his wife's acquaintance. Herder's was, however, a strangely crooked nature; his experience of life, his ill-health, poverty, and partial blindness had soured his temper, and given him a distrust of everything, even of good fortune.

Gottfried Herder was the son of a pious cantor and teacher in a girls' school at Möhringen. When only twelve years old his eyes became so affected that blindness seemed inevitable. A Russian surgeon offered to cure him of the disease, if he would promise to become an oculist. This agreement was entered into, and Herder went to St.

Petersburg. Fortunately, at the first operation he witnessed in the hospital he fainted, so he was sent back to his own country with the advice that, as surgery had failed, he had better try theology. This he did, keeping, however, an open mind as to Church matters. This was quite consistent with the spirit of the time, and his broad views advanced him in the calling he had adopted. His promotion was rapid. In 1764 we find him assistant teacher at the school attached to the Cathedral of Riga, and in an incredibly short time he became *Hof Prediger*—court preacher, or chaplain. He did not remain long at Riga. For the moment he abandoned his religious vocation, and, although he was offered immediate preferment, he accepted instead the post of tutor to the Princes of Holstein, who were about to make the grand tour. He travelled with them to Italy and France. At Strasburg, his eyes again becoming affected, he had to resign his post and remain under medical care. But this apparent trial led to good fortune, for here he met Wolfgang Goethe, who was the instrument of bringing him, as we know, to Weimar.

This was in 1776. He had just received the distinguished honour of a call to the great

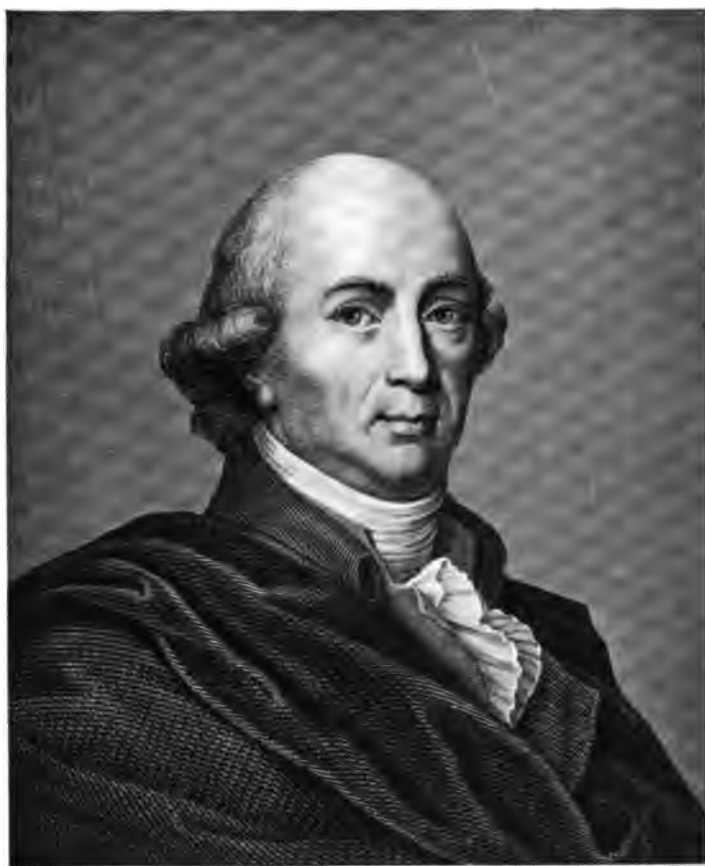
university of Göttingen, as professor of theology—a high distinction. Before, however, he could accept the post, the King of Hanover (who had his doubts as to some of Herder's views being too broad) made it a condition that he should go through what was called a *collegium*, or examination, before being installed in his chair. Herder refused, being upheld in his determination not to submit to what he considered an indignity, by the fact that he had in his pocket Goethe's lately received letter of invitation to come to Weimar as court preacher. In it there was no talk of sound views or broad views, everything at Weimar tending towards freedom of life and freedom of opinion.

That we should not look a gift horse in the mouth is a useful proverb which applies to many things. If Weimar was to be a second Athens, it must enjoy an Athenian liberty of opinion. So said friend Goethe, and Duke Karl agreed with him. Herder was officiating at Bückeberg when the invitation came to him. He had not given satisfaction to his congregation, who severely criticised his preaching; they felt he was no ordinary man, and they disliked him (as small minds do) for his superiority. As a preacher, it was true, that

he lacked strength ; they would have preferred what is called "a death and judgment" sermon, well sprinkled with brimstone. Herder's pale, dark face, his small, insignificant figure, his delicate appearance, were not imposing, neither were his postures nor delivery in any way striking or impressive ; his listeners were never touched, and "left the church as cold as they came in."

In a small room, on the contrary, both his appearance and his delivery produced an excellent impression. He made, however, one good friend in the great lady Gräfin of the neighbourhood, who became his constant benefactress. She it was who helped the helpless Herder to put the miserable parsonage into a decent condition for the reception of his bride, Caroline Flachsland, who at last had summoned courage to ask him when the long engagement was to be put an end to. Poor golden-headed Caroline—called by the Sentimentalists Psyche—had suffered enough under her brother-in-law's roof to desire a home of her home.

"A respectable old clergyman married us," writes Caroline ; "all my relations were present, and the evening was beautiful. We felt it was



GOTTFRIED HERDER.

[p. 264.]



God's blessing that was given to us ; the love of my dear brothers and sisters, the sweetness of the May day, the beauty of the starry night, seemed to come as a heavenly gift with the blessing of God upon our union."

Five months later, in October, 1776, Herder and his bride left Buckeberg to take up their residence in Weimar. Soon, however, clouds began to gather. From the first there was little *rapprochement* between Goethe and Herder, the latter feeling an ungenerous dislike to the man who had patronised him—for so his distorted mind viewed Goethe's kindly act. Naturally disgusted, although not surprised, at this phase of human nature, Goethe was quite willing to fall in with Herder's wish to stand aloof from his benefactor. This fact, however, did not prevent Wieland from entertaining jealous fears lest the new arrival should supersede him in Goethe's affection. This fear increased as time went on, and when Herder had been a year in his office, we find Wieland complaining bitterly to Merck.

"Goethe and Herder are, for me, as if they were not here. As to the first named—ah! when I remember the hours I used to spend in

delightful conversation with him, time flying as we talked !—and now, whether it is in consequence of the (as I shall always think) unfortunate circumstances in which he is placed, or has placed himself, his genius seems almost entirely to have left him, his imagination is clouded. Instead of the brilliant emanations which, like sparks, irradiated from every look and every word, he is now enveloped in a *political frost*. He is always kind and *harmless*, but he is absorbed in the contemplation of his own importance, and there is no approaching him. For the rest, we meet seldom. At the same time there is no quarrel between us. On the contrary, I am convinced of my love for him.

“As for Herder, everything that you prophesied as to him has come true, word for word. For particulars I must wait until we meet, as, please God, we shall soon. In one word, what has happened was to be expected, and I have at last (seeing that in his eminence’s eyes everything I did was set down to weakness of mind, or feeble character) withdrawn the stream of my benevolence and have retired into my shell. The man is impossible ; he is like a

thundercloud, full of electricity. From afar the meteor makes a fine impression, but may the devil keep me from close proximity with such a volcano. No one is more ready than I am to acknowledge the genius, goodness, excellence—in fact, all the good qualities, mental and spiritual—which a man may be possessed of, and likewise to agree that in comparison I am only as a farthing rushlight, but for the life of me I cannot endure to see a man so penetrated with the consciousness of his own worth; and truly he must be at bottom a poor creature to find satisfaction in teasing and spying on others; for my part I should like to put the Pyrenees between me and such a fellow.”

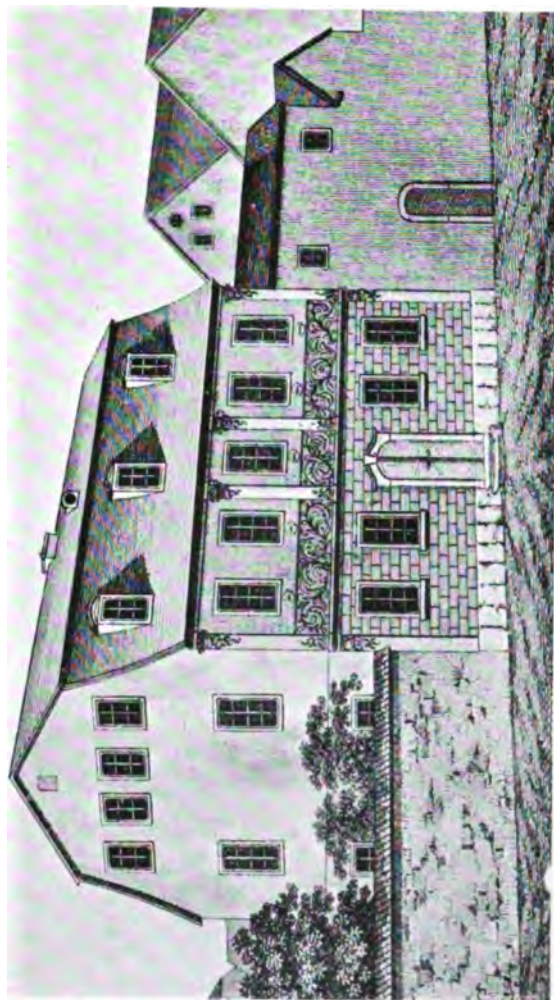
Herder, through ill-health and the hard fight he had with misfortune, was undoubtedly difficult to live with, and, therefore, not an agreeable addition to the circle at Weimar, where every one was in such close touch with the others; a man who, like Herder, was perpetually nursing a grievance against some one, became an incubus. It was true, in Herder's case, that, all through his life, he had lacked the acknowledgment which, *after his death*, was lavishly given to his great, undoubted

genius. Many men have had to suffer from this neglect while the public lavishes appreciation upon the favourite of the moment. The Herders, both husband and wife, were singularly wanting in gratitude, as is evinced in their correspondence with one another.

Anna Amalia, took the most benevolent interest in the struggles of a man of genius like Herder, who was cursed with poverty. The letters of Caroline Herder teem with grateful thanks for her constant gifts to help the family. Now it is a present of fur caps for the children, or a comfortable shawl for herself. January 20th, 1779, she writes in great delight over "the lovely piece of cloth which has just gone to the tailor's to be made into a coat for my son Gottfried, who, so soon as it is ready, will wait on your grace to show himself."

It is pleasant to find in Wieland a different disposition from Herder's. When, in 1777, he received the offer of a most tempting and lucrative appointment at Gotha, he writes to Merck :

"The advantages should be great indeed to compensate me for the life of tranquillity, ease, and affection, I enjoy here. . . . The royal family



WIELAND'S HOUSE IN WEIMAR.



are about the best people in the world ; they are well intentioned towards me, no one presses me ; they ask so little of me that I am really ashamed to eat their bread and do exactly as I like. Their highnesses in Gotha are well disposed towards me, and if any misfortune were to happen *here*, there is nothing would suit me better. But now I am content ; I sit under the shade of the trees in my garden in which, last autumn, I planted one hundred and ten apple, pear, and cherry trees ; and I ask you, would it not be a hard trial not to eat the *fruit* out of my *own orchard*, and would it not be foolish of me when I am happy in my obscurity (*Qui bene latent*, etc.) to plunge into *mare infidum* ? ”

Anna Amalia had a very tender regard for “der alte Wieland,” and a deep respect for his great gifts. All the same, she could not resist an occasional laugh at his expense, especially at the constant increase in his family. Writing to her uncle, Frederick the Great, she says :

“Danischwende (composer of the famous ‘Golden Mirror’) is again a happy father. I am sure the constant accouchements of his wife, and of the *Merkur* (the newspaper he edited), will be

at last too much for him. He seems to enjoy them both, however, so one can say nothing. Every one to his fancy."

But although she jested in this manner she was, in fact, a generous friend to the Wieland household, always ready to help when need arose in the ever-increasing family.

For the Duchess Louise, Wieland had an enthusiastic admiration, which was partly due to his having spent his early years at Darmstadt. The homage paid to his great gifts by the great Landgräfin and by the town of Darmstadt was very grateful to Wieland, who, until his "Oberon" drew all eyes on him, had been put in the shade by the younger genius, Goethe.

As this chapter is specially concerned with the Weimar circle, in 1776-1780, I do not think it will be thought amiss if I include Johann Friedrich Merck, who was constantly associated with Weimar, and especially with Anna Amalia. Merck was *l'ami de tout le monde*. "I.M.," Karl August calls him; "Friend Merck," was Anna Amalia's term in addressing him. A most delightful companion, cicerone, adviser as to all matters of art, and, moreover, pleasant as a companion,

and to be relied on as a friend—not a bad record to leave behind.

Merck's parentage was not distinguished ; he was the son of an apothecary in Darmstadt, and received an excellent education at Göttingen. He married early in life, after a passionate wooing, Louise Francesca Charbonnier, whose name shows her French descent. In the year 1767, he settled in Darmstadt, where he held several good appointments. He was versatile and clever, but wanted strength of mind and steadiness of purpose. His married life was not happy, although all accounts agree that the fault did not lie with the beautiful and highly gifted Francesca. One of his singularities was to take up his residence at Cassel, where he spent many months, during which time he wrote the most loving and despairing letters to his wife, all the time refusing to return to her. He was likewise much given to adoring the ladies of Darmstadt, and was much spoken of for his devotion to Caroline Flachsland, whose sister was married to Merck's intimate friend, Councillor Hesse.

Merck was a man of studious habits and remarkable judgment upon all matters of taste,

his knowledge on such points having been perfected by constant travel all over Europe. His opinion in all branches of art, ancient and modern, was eagerly sought by collectors of *objets d'art*. In addition to his undoubted experience in such matters, Merck was a delightful companion, being endowed with the qualities which make for social success (these, let it be noted, are generally natural, not acquired gifts). He was admitted to the friendship of many royal persons. As we already know, he accompanied the Landgräfin Caroline Henrietta to Russia, on the occasion of her daughter Wilhelmina's marriage to Duke Paul, afterwards Czar. We shall meet with him, acting as cicerone to Anna Amalia on one of her tours. From an intellectual standpoint Merck was held in high estimation; besides being a constant contributor to the *Merkur*, he wrote on art and artists, while his opinion and judgment was eagerly sought by writers like Herder and Wieland. Over the "young poet," who had risen like a giant amongst poets, Merck exercised a judicious influence. Goethe, indeed, in his early days, relied altogether on his friend's judgment. How short and to the point is the follow-

ing keen criticism as to the proper aim of all writing :—

“Thy endeavour, as always, is in the one direction, to give to the *realities* of life a poetic setting ; whereas other writers commit the stupidity of *investing* a situation which is *purely imaginary* with a poetic halo which is utterly incongruous, and therefore leaves the reader *unconvinced*, this being a fatal as well as a stupid piece of nonsense.”

Wieland, who cherished in his capacious heart a tender attachment for “that excellent Merck,” writes to him on one occasion : “When thou hast given thy opinion without pique or bias of any sort, it would be indeed a foolish man who would refuse to submit his judgment to thine, or would venture to appeal to another judge.” And on another occasion Wieland bursts out with a protestation : “Rather than be unfaithful to thee, I would strangle my wife and my children : of this thou may’st be convinced.”

Anna Amalia made Merck’s acquaintance in Frankfurt in 1778. In July of this year the duchess, accompanied by her lady-in-waiting, the sprightly Göchhausen, and her gentleman-in-waiting, von Einsiedel, made an excursion into the Rhine

provinces to study art and to enjoy herself, both of which intentions she fulfilled in the most satisfactory manner. She visited Düsseldorf, and at Münster made one of the "mystic circle" which gathered round the Princess Galitzin; in Coblenz likewise she made acquaintance with Wieland's lifelong friend, Frau de la Roche,¹ and in Frankfurt met for the first time Goethe's

¹ Sophie Gutermann, afterwards Sophie de la Roche, born in 1731, was daughter to an eminent physician who was ennobled, under the name of von Gutenhofen. She had been carefully educated, spoke several languages fluently, and had gone through regular training in different branches of science and philosophy. So far as one can judge, she was in advance of our first class Girton girls. But her cleverness did not make her less submissive to parental authority. Fathers and mothers in the eighteenth century were tyrants, disposing at will of the affections of their children. Sophie's case was more than usually hard. She had married a clever and altogether charming Italian physician, Bianconi by name, attached to the household of the Prince Bishop of Augsburg. This marriage was ruthlessly set aside by her bigoted father, who was a stern, uncompromising Lutheran, and who having the law on his side, separated the young and loving couple. Sophie was sent away, a disgrace to her family, to her grandfather, Senator Gutermann, at Biberach. After his death she was placed under the care of Pfarrer Wieland. As a natural consequence, Christopher, who was then about seventeen, fell over head and ears in love with the bodily and mental charms of this fascinating woman, who was, moreover, connected with him by inter-marriage. He wanted to make her his wife, but the unkindness of his stepmother to Sophie, together with the intrigues of her (Sophie's) stepmother, separated the young people, after a three



SOPHIE DE LA ROCHE, BORN VON GUTERMANN.

[p. 274.]



mother. From that meeting began the intimate friendship which for years continued between the duchess and Frau Aja.

Einsiedel writes to Knebel, "Of Goethe's mother I can only tell you that she surpasses all you have said of her. At her house we met Merck, who since then has been our travelling companion. Without doubt he is one of the most remarkable men that I have ever known; he possesses social gifts in advance of any one either you or I are acquainted with. The pleasure the duchess finds in his society adds much to our general content." He adds: "Merck is a great authority on all artistic matters, and knows more about such things than the rogues of artists do."

This letter set the tongues of gossips in Weimar wagging. The duchess had caught a new "lion" and was bringing him back in her train. Whereupon speculations began, as to whether the lion (Goethe), who had been in possession more than

years' engagement. In 1754, Sophie became the wife of Hofrath Frank de la Roche. Wieland to the end of his life considered his Sophie a pearl amongst women. It is curious to note that her granddaughter was Bettina Brentano (Goethe's "Bettina").

three years, would be turned out, or whether he would maintain his position, and overthrow the new pet (Merck) whom the duchess was bringing with her.

As a matter of fact the duchess arrived from her tour on August 1st without the "new pet," who preferred to return to his own home "to dream over the happy hours he had spent in her gracious presence, and to give thanks to Fate, who for once had bestowed upon a poor wretch like him (Merck) four weeks of golden days." Very nicely put, friend Merck.

Anna Amalia answered this effusion in a very pretty letter.

"Your honest gratitude for the pleasant moments we spent in agreeable converse or in looking at the lovely Rhineland, is very flattering to me; and I can in return assure you that you contributed considerably to my enjoyment. I feel grateful for the opportunity given to me of knowing one who possesses as you do a firm belief in truth and goodness, and who with a true faith and courage submits himself to the will of Providence. Farewell, and do not forget your promise to come to us soon. My son will

be glad to see you, and you may be sure of the unchangeable regard of your friend,

“AMALIA.”

The princess accompanied this letter with a very handsome gift of money, which Merck, protesting all the time he did not deserve such liberality, accepted; and from this period he seems to have taken upon himself the office of agent in the matter of buying *objets d'art* and such like for his gracious lady, acquitting himself with his usual judgment and spending a wonderfully small amount of money. This self-imposed office led to a correspondence carried on through many years. During this correspondence good friend Merck occasionally overstepped the proper reserve, which, according to our ideas should exist between a royal lady and her “man of business,” for so we must consider Merck.

From his original signature “humble slave” he becomes after a short time “humble servant,” and the tone of the letters is that of an impetuous young man writing to a friend or comrade. The duchess, however, was endowed

with the dignified courtesy which was a marked characteristic of the *grande dame* of the eighteenth century, and passed over these slight indiscretions with the *savoir faire* of a true aristocrat, remaining on friendly terms with that "excellent Merck."

As we have said, the duchess's excursion to the Rhineland came to an end on August 1st, 1778, and that inveterate but delightful letter-writer, Wieland, writes on August 2nd to Merck :¹

"The duchess arrived yesterday evening. She had a wonderful reception—triumph and kettle-drums, with great demonstrations from the faithful and devoted citizens on her return. Of course, I only saluted the court *en passant*, but I am to behold her to-day at her toilette. The people here say that the duchess has picked up a new *bel esprit*, and brought him back in her train. He rejoices, they tell me, in the name of 'Marks,'² and you can imagine what fun can be got out of this unfortunate appellation ; although in this position much would depend on the personal appearance of the bearer.

¹ Compare this letter with Wieland's adulation of the duchess in his correspondence with her.

² Marks must have been a travesty on the name Merck.

You can understand that this has given rise to much joking over the 'Marksen' past and present, (fortunately for me my years and appearance put me '*hors de jeu et de combat*' and there was much curiosity to see if the new marrow-bone would put the nose of the one who has been ruling the roost for the last three years out of joint, or if the latter would maintain his position in the first rank.

"In fact, to understand the gist of the tittle-tattle you should be familiar with the undercurrent of popular feeling, that is, the hatred that prevails here against any one who belongs to the circle of wits and *beaux esprits* and what a d——d medley of confused notions this name conveys to the unenlightened. For the rest you cannot imagine what a distinguished place you fill in the esteem of Duchess Amalia. Nothing affords me more gratification than to hear commendation bestowed upon those whom I love and esteem, and I can give you every assurance of Anna Amalia's friendship. I am commissioned to give you a thousand compliments, and that her Durchlaucht (Highness) counts on the fulfilment of your promise to spend some weeks here in the coming winter. She told me that she had grown so accustomed to see you,

that she misses you *at every turn*—in short, you have won her esteem, and you may be sure I seized the opportunity to repeat to her grace all your praises of her and how you were devoted to her body and soul.”

From this time a great friendship existed between Merck, the duchess, and those of her suite who had been Merck’s travelling companions. His name is continually turning up in the voluminous correspondence of the Duchess, Thusnelda, and others. He seems to have been a general favourite and his visits were anxiously looked for. The duchess, who corresponded with the good Merck at great length on the subject of art also gave him news of the court.

In one of her letters she complains bitterly of the report which has been spread everywhere that her tour had a political object. “The gossips here insist upon my little pleasure trip being an invention of the cabinet. This has very much annoyed Einsiedel, Kraus, and Thusnelda, who are indignant at having to descend from their dignified position of “connoisseurs” to the rearguard of court officials. The Stein,” she adds, “makes me shiver with her talk of Rembrandt and Vandyck.” She concludes

by asking friend Merck to buy her a wine cooler, and encloses a bank order (for Amalia was singularly honest in all money dealings). She adds a request that Goethe may not hear of this piece of extravagance. "It might give him a fit," she writes, "seeing that Rath Goethe grows miserly in his old age."

In another letter she writes pleasantly :

"I was on the point of sending you an epistle charged with gall and wormwood when yours, four pages long, reached me. This softened my wrath somewhat, but not sufficiently to silence me as to the prostitution of your valuable time, running about here and there as you do. As I understand, you now keep company with publicans and sinners. I was obliged to send messengers to all the encyclopædists, booksellers, and political Satans in Frankfurt, in search of you. All that was wanting was the Darmstadt trumpeters whose noise still rings in my ear. They would have made fine noise drumming out the War Counsellor Merck—and all this in vain. Set out at once, you unclean spirit, and may good angels send us back our good old Merck, heartily welcome always to us."

Amalia's friendship must have cheered the latter

portion of Merck's life, which ended in the terrible gloom of insanity. He could still find pleasure in her letters and in such kind words as "Farewell, my dear old Merck, keep well and never forget you have a friend in Amalia."

CHAPTER VIII

TWICE a week the dowager-duchess dined with her son at the court table. On Sundays there was high festival, when the officers on guard, the ladies of court, as also the gentlemen, could dine if they chose. On Wednesdays guests could only come by invitation. The dowager-duchess had a public reception at the Witthums-haus every Thursday, at which the newly married pair and the court were always present, while her private and more literary circle generally met on Fridays.

Anna Amalia's general circle (it was often supplemented by guests or chance visitors to Weimar) included her personal suite. Her ladies were Frau von Stein, lady-in-waiting, and Fräulein von Göchhausen, or Thusnelda, the name by which she was generally known; the one remarkable for her beauty and her lovers, the other for her plainness and her wit. He who knows

the heart of woman cannot be sure that Göchhausen would not have sacrificed her wit for Charlotte's beauty; and who can say that she would have been wrong? We know that a statesman and writer of reputation—D'Israeli, no less—said, if given the choice, he would elect to be a beautiful woman up to the age of twenty-five.

Poor Göchhausen was deformed and small of stature; her mortification at her want of height was increased by a whim of the duchess, who christened her tiny maid-of-honour, Thusnelda, after the woman whom all Germany honoured for her *gigantic* stature, while Wieland gave her the name of the Gnomide. Thusnelda the second could not well be offended at this joke, for she herself was given to the bestowal of nicknames—in fact, every sort of joke was to her fancy. She indulged in tricks of all kinds, and took it in good part when others retaliated in the same manner, although the jokes played upon her by Karl August and Goethe sometimes passed the limits of a friendly jest.

Small in stature, frail in body, by no means pretty, Thusnelda was full of *esprit*, extremely witty, well-educated (according to the high standard of

education in her day), and possessed of natural gifts which imparted to her conversation a delightful freshness. She spoke three languages with fluency, so that her conversational powers were not limited to her native tongue. It is curious how this gift of conversing well seems to be no longer necessary, and if one may use a vulgar expression, there is a decided "slump" in good talkers. Where and why has this delightful gift disappeared? Will it ever come back? Or is it that, being a plant of delicate nurture, an exotic, in fact, difficult to rear and requiring delicate and peculiar handling, it has died out for the want of congenial soil?

The gift of conversing—by this of course is meant talking, not gossiping—is by no means confined to the French (although possessed by some French men and women in an extraordinary degree). Some of the best conversationalists of the nineteenth century were Germans or Russians, notably, Madame de Stael and Madame de Krudener. The salon of Anna Amalia may be said to have been the parent of the salons of 1801, and the quality of the talk was quite up to the standard of the later period. How could it be otherwise, when such intellectual giants were of the company?

Fancy a table round which sat Goethe, Herder, Wieland, Gleim (occasionally), and the lesser lights, Knebel, Einsiedel, and Merck ! The list could be considerably extended.

The women, too, bore their share bravely, for Duchess Anna Amalia talked with "much elegance," as was natural to one of her race. Fräulein Göchhausen was sprightly and *tant soit peu* audacious ; Charlotte von Stein appreciative ; Charlotte von Kalb satirical and clever ; Amalia von Kotzebue trenchant ; Henrietta von Eggloffstein amusing ; the Englishwomen who later joined the circle were pleasant, and occasional strangers added their quota to the general whole. Amalia was, however, careful to keep the standard of conversation up to a certain level. A good conversationalist herself (as most foreigners are), she understood that too much talk is apt to degenerate into mere dribble ; therefore she made a rule that there should be intervals of reading aloud, and hence some one—it might be Knebel, or perhaps the amiable Einsiedel—set the ball rolling by reading aloud some new poem or essay which had appeared in the *Merkur*, or some *jeu d'esprit* from one of the wits, or a poem

written by Knebel or Einsiedel, both of whom had a pretty talent for verse-making.

Soon sparkling witticisms began to circulate; there was an interchange of repartee; the shrill laugh of Fräulein Göchhausen mingled with the cooing softness of Charlotte von Stein, and the Fräulein von Göchhausen and the Baroness von Stein were not the only ladies who had a reputation for wit and beauty. Amongst the numbers whose names appear in memoirs and letters of the period, the first places for agreeable manners, full of that charm which characterised the *grande dame* of the eighteenth century, must be given to clever Frau von Eggloffstein and the pretty Henrietta von Eggloffstein, whose memoirs of the time in which she lived are such pleasant reading; to the highly cultivated Amalia von Imhoff, painter and poetess; to Countess Bernstoff, sister to the Count von Stolberg; to Fräulein von Wolfskeil, and to Fräulein Marie Oertel; this last named was an especial favourite by reason of her cleverness and her readiness to fill a gap when this was needed, either in conversation or in whatever might be going on. The personal appearance of Fräulein Marie was in itself so

provocative of fun and good humour, that her extreme plainness was soon forgiven, especially by men, with whom she was extremely popular.

Amongst the men the first place must be accorded to Friedrich von Einsiedel, the duke's chamberlain, who, from his amiable disposition, received the name of L'Ami, or "friend of his friends." Einsiedel had from his boyhood served about the court, having been in the days of the regency one of Anna Amalia's pages, in which character he had played many a boyish prank, and it must be owned he made anything but a dignified Chamberlain, many of his adventures having a Falstaffian ring. He could indeed have claimed like that worthy, that he was not only witty himself, but the cause of wit in others. The strange fits of absence of mind which occasionally seized upon him, and during which his purse or hat could be taken from him without his being aware of it, gave rise to numerous tricks which helped to dispel the *ennui* that, despite the presence of the great geniuses who made their home in the little capital, was apt to fall upon the courtiers. Henrietta von Eggloffstein, in her memoirs, gives an amusing anecdote of Einsiedel.



FRIEDRICH HILDEBRAND FREIHERR VON EINSIEDEL.
From a portrait in the possession of the Grand Duke of Saxe-Weimar.



"On the birthday of the reigning Duchess Louise, Einsiedel was to conduct nine young ladies, dressed as the Muses, to the presence of the duchess, there to recite a poem with congratulations on the auspicious occasion. Arrived at the palace he found, when in the presence of the duchess, that he had forgotten the poem. The Muses in indignation surrounded him and, half in fun, seized him by his coat tails and dragged him here and there, from side to side, each one joining in the chorus of abuse showered upon him for his negligence. The scene was truly comic, the duchess joining in the general laughter which was excited by the spectacle presented by the unfortunate Einsiedel, his yellow wig dragged to one side and displaying his jovial face, from which the mask had fallen off."¹

Einsiedel, however, must have possessed qualities of a higher order than mere harmless fun and good

¹ Once, when Einsiedel was to act the part of a Moor at the theatre, he had his face blacked and dressed for the part early. Presently, forgetting all about the play and his singular attire, he went out to take a walk, and, being in a more than usually forgetful state of mind, wandered a long way, and, being taken for the Moor he was personating, attracted a large crowd, who became by degrees unpleasant, he was rescued with some difficulty from their hands.

humour, else he could not have enjoyed an intimate friendship with men of the high standard of Herder and Schiller. "Einsiedel is an excellent, unaffected man," writes the latter to his friend Körner, "and is far from being devoid of talent." He is sometimes confounded with his brother, also in the duke's service as gentleman-in-waiting, and who, being of a gay, dissipated character, got into some discreditable adventures; one of these, his marriage with Countess von Wertheim, is so singular as to deserve mention. This lady, who was one of the court circle had agreed to desert her husband and children and country for love of the handsome gentleman-in-waiting.

This is, unfortunately, not a new experience in the world's history; but the countess's manner of loosening the matrimonial bond was certainly novel, and undoubtedly showed she had some regard for her husband's feelings. This lady had a constitutional tendency to fall into swoons which lasted some time. She took advantage of this weakness to feign death; her ruse succeeded, and she was laid out as really dead. With the assistance of a maid she rose up in the middle of the night and made her escape to her lover.

A wooden figure wrapped up in her grave-clothes was buried in the family vault. Einsiedel took his fair one to Africa, where he had gold mines. Both of them soon wearied of their banishment and returned to Germany.

We can imagine the astonishment and indignation of the deceived husband and family, on seeing the resuscitation of one whom they supposed to be dead. In the eighteenth century, however, great leniency was shown in regard to such episodes, foreign courts, and especially those of Germany, possessing a very low standard of morals. Take, for example, the debased condition of the Court of the Electors of Hanover, while at Würtemberg, Dresden, and Berlin a like condition of open immorality existed. The Court of Weimar does not present such an infamous record. Nevertheless, general laxity prevailed, and there was a strong flavour of the unhealthy French school mingled with the romance and sentiment which is at the bottom of the German character.

As for the pair whose story has been told, and about whose future my readers may be curious, a legal separation was obtained for the (supposed)

corpse, and Countess von Wertheim was legally married to the duke's gentleman-in-waiting, who lived to the ripe age of seventy.

Karl Ludwig von Knebel was born on November 20th, 1744. His father held different posts, having been at one time chancellor, then ambassador to Regensburg, finally *geheimerath* in Anspach, to which province he belonged by right of inheritance. Karl had excellent teachers both in Regensburg and Anspach; he enjoyed study but detested the law for which his father destined him. Finally, seeing there was no use in further opposition, the *geheimerath* gave his consent and Knebel was allowed to enter on a military career. He served for ten years very respectably, but without making a military reputation. From the time he retired into private life he devoted himself altogether to the Muses, and here again his devotion met with a small return. He never received any particular favour from the mistress he courted so assiduously.

Meantime, his position, as tutor to Prince Constantine and travelling companion to Karl August, brought him in contact with all those most distinguished in art, literature, and politics.

Knebel, as we know, accompanied Prince Karl on his first visit to Frankfurt, where the memorable meeting with Goethe took place. Later on he had some experience of the court of Karlsruhe, and of the duchess's father, the odd Landgraf. Karl Friedrich who was given to taking fancies, in obedience to the strange law of contrasts which so often governs likings, especially with quick-blooded persons, became possessed by one of his sudden whimsical friendships, the object being the unfortunate Knebel. Knebel soon discovered that this preference drew upon him the eyes of the whole court, which, urged by insane jealousy of all the tokens of friendship lavished on him by the Landgraf, made the rest of his tour with the young princes exceedingly unpleasant.

The princes felt they had been overshadowed by their tutor, especially as Görtz, who from the first had taken a jealous dislike to Knebel, did all in his power to insinuate that that officer had his own reasons for the manner in which he had behaved. And what was even worse to a man of Knebel's shy character, he made him a butt for all his coarse pleasantries.

One of these took a form most disagreeable

to a man of Knebel's retiring disposition. It appeared that Knebel, who up to this had guarded strictly the doors of his inner citadel against the attacks of the fair ladies of Weimar, had been suddenly surprised and his citadel had been captured by a fair markswoman in Karlsruhe, who, unconsciously or with malice prepense, had winged her arrow straight at the gallant major's breast. The fair markswoman was a certain court lady—by name Fräulein von Göchhausen, otherwise Thusnelda, who was at this time acting as maid-of-honour to the Markgräfin of Baden. Knebel mentions her in his diary; but with the reticence one could expect from one of his retiring character, he specially remarks that, *for a woman*, she had a wonderful sense of morality! It was not this quality that attracted him, however, neither was it her beauty, although he extols her appearance, love, we must suppose, making him blind to her deformity. Her wit it was that penetrated poor Knebel's heart. It does not appear that he ever told his love. He was poor, and on that account was shy of asking any woman to share his small fortune; this secret, however, oozed out.

The jests levelled at him and the lady of his thoughts, were exquisite torture to a man of Knebel's character. He mentions this love passage of his in his diary, but in so guarded a manner that there is nothing worth repeating. Apart from this episode, Knebel's life story was almost tragic. Not indeed, in the sense that it contained startling or terrible events, but rather that kind of tragedy which underlies the lives of many, unknown even to their best and nearest friends. His letters to the sister who loved him so devotedly give us the key to the whole story. Nature had given him a fine appearance, an excellent heart, a good understanding; he was clever and well-educated, literary in his tastes, a good soldier. He had, however, the faults of youth; he was excitable and obstinate and was no courtier, hence he never got on—he could neither favour nor flatter, and his poverty prevented him from joining in the amusements of the court, especially the gambling, which went on pretty freely at the duke's house. The suffering caused to Knebel, by having to run the risk of losing a few shillings, to him a sum of importance, is piteous.

“My soul,” he writes to his sister, “suffers,

but never so much as when I am in the gay world of the court ; then I am miserable." And again, " Since October we play here two or three times a week. I have won a few groschen, but on most occasions I have lost several thalers. This is an infamous method of losing money and in no way suited to people of our means." He had a morbid manner of looking at everything. When friends suggested his making use of a pleasant talent he had for writing he said : " What should I write about that is not either too late or too soon for this generation ? "

In the same way when an heiress showed herself favourable towards him he writes to his sister : " Providence intended us to be poor, and therefore gave us a certain limpness, which is opposed to success in any, but especially in this direction."

Karl August, with his active and self-reliant mind, grew weary of this same limpness, and showed his desire to be rid of his old friend so plainly that Knebel retired to Jena, bitterly disappointed that he had not been given a post in the administration. His sister Henrietta was a replica of her brother, having the same miserable self-distrust and self-consciousness, which made

the lives of both brother and sister miserable. Her brother considered her a highly gifted and altogether remarkable woman, whereas she was an ordinary and not particularly interesting character. Knebel's brother Max, who was a source of great trouble all through his life, in the end committed suicide. After this calamity matters brightened. The duchess Louise entrusted the wonderful Henrietta with the education of the Princess Caroline (who seems to have lived with her governess), and Anna Amalia married Knebel to the charming singer, Fräulein von Rudorf.

Heinrich Meyer, the artist largely patronised by Karl August and Goethe, had much simplicity combined with a reserve of dry humour, which made him a most amusing narrator.

Count Karl Brühl, afterwards manager of the Court Theatre at Berlin, paid visits to Weimar lasting for months, and may be counted as forming one of the duchess's circle. Brühl, whose musical talent was remarkable, was also a fine declaimer of poetry, and being a man of all-round talent, was always made welcome, bringing as he did the freshest news of all artistic and literary novelties.

To these names we must add that of Bertuch, the comptroller of Karl August's household, Ridel and the brothers Fritsch, Herr von Seckendorf, and Baron von Wolfskeil, gentleman-in-waiting to Karl August. Herder and Goethe occasionally looked in, and Wieland was a constant visitor to the Witthumshaus; later came Schiller and Jean Paul Richter.

That amiable artist, Kraus, has handed down the principal members of Anna Amalia's circle, in the well-known picture, which hangs in the grand-ducal library, and is in itself a lasting testimony to the duchess's excellent taste.¹

Here we have the principal members of Amalia's circle as they sat round the table on a certain Friday and were sketched by the young artist. Amalia is painting, her brush in her hand, a smile on her pleasant face (this portrait produces

¹ It will be remembered that one of the first acts of Amalia's regency was the conversion of the Französische Schloss from being an arsenal (for which purpose it has been used by Duke Ernest) to its original purpose, a library. She had all the books brought from the different ducal residences and filled the shelves with them. They did not make a goodly show, but it was sufficient for the duchess's purpose; and later the ever-delightful library was added, which is now a fitting home for the fine *éditions de luxe* placed there by the duchess and the celebrated circle of Weimar.

Henrietta von Fritsch.

Eliza Gore.
Anna Amalia.

Herder.



Heinrich Meyer. Goethe. Einsiedel.

Emily Gore. Louise von Gochhausen.

ANNA AMALIA ; ROUND TABLE OR FRIDAY MEETINGS AT THE WITTUMS PALAIS.

[p. 299.]



a more favourable impression of the duchess than does the well-known portrait so generally put forward), as she listens to Einsiedel, who, in his uniform of gentleman-in-waiting, is reading aloud, probably one of his own "little things."

Goethe, who is sitting beside him, is almost effaced; one sees the back of his *perruque*, with the pigtail tied with a black bow. The very pretty woman next to him is Henriette von Fritsch (wife to one of Minister von Fritsch's sons), who held the post of lady-in-waiting to Anna Amalia. Her neighbour in the corner is Hinrich Meyer. Seated, next to the duchess is Elizabeth Gore,¹ the elder of the two English

¹ A sort of mystery surrounds the Gore family. Every effort has been made by the curious enquirer for many years to find out who they were, but in vain. They were, apparently, not connected with the noble family of Arran, from whom nearly all of the name Gore seek parentage. My enquiries into the subject, although I called in the assistance of the invaluable "Notes and Queries," have produced no solution beyond the already well-known fact that, in 1788-9, an English family of the name of Gore were making the grand tour, and visited Weimar. Father and daughters were so pleased with the geniality and refined tone of the little capital that they returned, and finally made it their home. Mr. Gore, who is described as a wealthy merchant, seems to have been an insignificant sort of lay figure—indeed, the only one of the trio who made a mark was Emily Gore. She was at first honoured by Duchess Louise's friendship, which friendship met with the cordial approval of Karl August, who

ladies who with their father, Charles Gore, made Weimar their home. On the other side of the table is her sister Emily, dressed in black, with a wonderful hat and an air of being *somebody*. Beside her sits clever little Fräulein Göchhausen, a satirical smile on her Jewish face. Behind her looms the great personality of His Eminence Herder, his hand on the back of Göchhausen's chair and his large face staring with an intense expression which conveys more of wonder than admiration.

The merits of the picture, which is a large one, are diminished by its being reduced to the necessary dimensions for our present purpose. It should be seen in its entirety.

writes to Knebel of the fine qualities of Emily Gore. (See p. 198) No doubt it was her mental qualities that attracted Karl August; it could not have been her beauty, her appearance being in the last degree what was then called *Anglaise pour rire*. Neither personal nor mental qualities made any difference in the ripples of scandal that were circulated anent the duke's attentions. Knebel's sister Henrietta writes to him, 1781: "The English family of Gore are to return here this winter. Weimar is full of gossip; this is very unpleasant for all parties." The Gores fade out of the Weimar chronicles. Emily Gore is, however, buried in the old churchyard. Some money was left either by Mr. Gore or Emily to the town. It has never been realised, in consequence of all trace of the Gores being lost.

As we look at this interesting picture, the question arises: "How would such a society meet in the present day?" The experiment has been tried and has always failed—the wits at Holland House and fore house were an approach, but Macaulay has given testimony as to the want of success that attended these receptions.

During the winter season Fräulein von Göchhausen's Saturday breakfasts were, next to Anna Amalia's Fridays, a favourite entertainment. As a matter of fact they were more popular than the Fridays of the gracious lady, for the reason that there was more freedom and less *gêne*. Thusnelda, being a popular little woman, had the best of good company, with savants, pretty women, and fashionable men; while each invited guest, out of friendship for the kind little hostess, did his or her best to make them a brilliant success. One cannot help noticing, as a dispassionate onlooker, free from bias and prejudice, that Thusnelda's breakfasts were, on the whole, better organised than were Anna Amalia's round-table afternoons.

People were more at their ease than under the eye of the duchess (kindly as her glance might be); consequently there was less effort and more spon-

taneous wit. The lesser stars, who were often crushed by the magnitude of the greater lights, could shine with their own effulgence; and yet it is not to be supposed that the company gathered at Thusnelda's were not learned men and women. Böttiger once read a tragedy by Sophocles, the different parts being distributed amongst the company. Think of it, ye Girton girls, and say, could ye do likewise? On another occasion a question was set which was to be answered at the following Saturday breakfast, and the answer being satisfactory, a second trial was made.

"What did Schiller mean by his *Mädchen aus der Fremde*?"

The Countess von Eggloffstein (not Henrietta, who was her sister-in-law) sang the poem. Her commanding figure, her inspired face, with the brilliant eyes full of life and spirituality, carried conviction to the minds of the listeners, who with one voice agreed with the singer that the *Mädchen* was poetry.

Music often lent its charm to Thusnelda's *réunions*. Wölff, the Kapellmeister, was a pianoforte player of repute, and Hümmel, *the* composer of

the day, played at many of these gatherings, while Corona Schröter was occasionally persuaded to let her charming voice be heard.

Another house which "received" was that of the Eggloffsteins. Here on Sunday afternoons all Weimar came, especially during the short days of winter, when picnics and outings were impossible. The company, which was of the best, occasionally stayed so late, being either engaged in learned discussions or sometimes in silly gossip (for all the world of Weimar was not learned), that the afternoon became evening and, as the discourse was not half ended, these chosen friends remained for supper and often into the small hours of the morning.

Gleim, who, being on a visit at Weimar, was invited to one of the duchess's Fridays, tells this story :

"I brought in my pocket a copy of the just published 'Göttingen Musenalmanach,' and at the duchess's request I read from it to the assembly. Whilst I was still reading a young man came in, whom I hardly looked at. He had spurs to his boots, I noticed, and wore a short, green hunting coat. He sat down amongst the listeners—he

was exactly opposite to me—and listened very attentively. Except that he had wonderful black eyes, his appearance did not make any impression on me. However, it was fated that I should make nearer acquaintance with him. During a pause in my reading several persons began to discuss the book, one praising it and others finding fault. The young sportsman, as I thought he was, got up from his seat and, addressing me in a most courteous manner, proposed that he should relieve me, as I must be fatigued with reading aloud, by taking my place for a short time. I could not refuse so courteous a proposal, and handed him the volume.

“But, Apollo and the Nine Muses! what did I hear? At first it was some mild stanzas, but then came an avalanche of wild imaginings that were not in the ‘Almanach,’ bits of Burger’s and Stolberg’s poems that would never have had a place in the volume he held in his hand. Once it actually seemed to me as if Satan had taken hold bodily of the reader, and I almost expected to see his Satanic Majesty appear before me. The poems this man, or demon, read, were delivered in a voice that was capable

of expressing every modulation, every note of the human gamut, while he mixed up in a strange jumble, without confusion of text, hexameters, iambics, and doggerel. And as he poured out this stream of romance with the greatest gravity, it seemed as if he had a sort of mission to fulfil. How wondrous was the humour of his extraordinary imaginations! glimpses of the wonderful, the marvellous, the all-enchanting, scattered thoughts of such infinite beauty, that the authors to whom he ascribed them might have thanked heaven on their knees, if they could have had such wonderful imaginings.

“So soon as the joke got bruited about, the whole company were filled with delight. They all gathered round, and to each one present the poet gave a few lines. I was lightly reprovèd for setting up to be a Meacænas to all young poets, artists, and scholars. I was praised on one hand, ridiculed on the other. He compared me wittily enough in a short fable in doggerel verse to an unusually patient turkey hen, who sits upon eggs which are not her own, and who on one occasion tried to hatch an egg made of chalk. At this I called out to Wieland, who was sitting opposite

to me at the table : 'That is either Goethe or the devil !' And he answered me in the affirmative, adding : 'He has got the devil inside of him to-day, who is trying to get out on one side or the other : so take my advice ; don't go too near him.' "

